

# Discussion Questions for "My Name is Mary Sutter"

All Iowa Reads Discussion Questions 2015 created by Jean Casey, Retired Clear Lake Library Director & AIR Committee member



1. Who is a feminist? Is Mary a feminist or simply a strong woman determined to achieve her career goal? What personal qualities enabled Mary to envision herself as a surgeon at a time when women physicians were extremely rare in this country?
2. Who were Mary's mentors? How did Mary change the lives of these persons?
3. In a conversation with John Hay, Mary describes Dorothea Dix as "the woman who ran the war." Why did Mary say this and was her description accurate?
4. In an interview, Oliveira has stated: "The Civil War played the role that most wars play: they have a tendency to liberate women." Explain this statement.
5. Amelia and Lincoln both suffered the loss of two children and each feared that the war would take another child from them. How did their intense grief affect their professional lives? How did it alter their relationships with their surviving children?
6. Oliveira offers graphic descriptions of childbirth, action at the front, and life at the field hospitals. What scenes did you find particularly compelling?
7. Why did Thomas re-enlist? Why did Mary return to Washington, and ultimately to the field hospitals, after Jenny's death?
8. Northerners called this war "The War of Rebellion." Southerners viewed it as "The War of Southern Independence." Yanks said that the conflict was about slavery. Rebels said that the key issue was states' rights. Are there still echoes of the Civil War in our nation today?
9. Is the ending too tidy, bringing Mary and Stipp together after years of separation? If they wed, will they be happy? Do you think that Mary wants to be a mother?
10. Compare and contrast Mary Sutter and Scarlett O'Hara, heroine of *Gone with the Wind*.
11. Is the historical fiction genre an effective tool for teaching history?