**Reader Group Guide**

1. After only twenty-one months of marriage, Jo’s husband, Theo, died, leaving her with a one-year-old baby to care for. If you were Jo, how would you feel?
2. While Jo inhabited a woman’s world in the late nineteenth century, she aspired to function as an art dealer, a realm reserved for men. Discuss the spheres available to women at the time. What factors led her to realize she could be a participant? In what ways is the idea of “women’s work” the same or different today?
3. The novel takes place at a unique time in history—the turn of the century—showcasing Europe on the cusp of change with newfound nationalism, a rising middle class due to industrialization, and a developing consciousness of women’s and workers’ rights. How does the setting affect the characters? What role, if any does it play in shaping their lives? Does it provide them with opportunities they wouldn’t otherwise have?
4. Jo felt a strong duty to ensure her son would receive a valuable inheritance. How does this commitment motivate her decisions and actions? If you were Jo, what type of commitment would drive you forward?
5. While the world of Jo is grounded in fact, Georges Raulf is a fictional character, an aggregate of the attitudes and objections Jo faced in her pursuit to promote Vincent’s work. How did you feel about Raulf? Did those feelings change over the course of the novel, and if so, how?
6. Compare/contrast Jo and her nemesis, Georges Raulf. In what ways are they similar? Different?
7. Vincent van Gogh is one of the most recognizable names in the world. What was your understanding of him before you read the novel, and how did your understanding change, if at all?
8. Did Jo’s metamorphosis from a timid young mother to confident marketer surprise you? Why?
9. What is the importance of female relationships in Jo’s story? Name the women who had the strongest influence on Jo and why.
10. The title of the book could be interpreted several ways. What meaning do you glean from the title? Did your interpretation change from the beginning to the end of the novel, if at all?
11. What benefits do we gain from rediscovering and giving credit to historical women like Jo whose stories are untold?
12. In the dedication, this biographical novel is called a historical fiction parable, a story with the purpose to convey greater truths. What principles do you believe Jo van Gogh’s story illustrates?