



## Readers Discussion Guide

### *A Beauty So Rare*

a Belmont Mansion novel, Book 2  
by Tamera Alexander

**SPOILER ALERT!** As would be expected in a discussion guide, crucial plot points and events are revealed in the following questions. So if you haven't finished reading *A Beauty So Rare* and don't wish to have these "surprises" spoiled, you might want to skip reading the group guide until you have.

Check out the Belmont Mansion Novels page on Tamera's website ([www.TameraAlexander.com](http://www.TameraAlexander.com)) for pictures of the mansion, conservatory, and other parts of the Belmont estate featured in the novel.

Dear friends,

I'm thrilled you've chosen *A Beauty So Rare* as your reading group selection, and I hope you enjoyed Marcus and Eleanor's story, and the setting of the Belmont Mansion, the home for widows and children, and the Nashville Insane Asylum. Christ drew me closer to Him as I wrote this story, and my prayer is that somewhere along the way as you read, you took a step closer to Him too.

I'd love to join your group discussion!

If you're interested in having me join your group via a Virtual Book Club Meeting, visit my website ([www.TameraAlexander.com](http://www.TameraAlexander.com)) and click on BONUS FEATURES to learn more about Virtual Book Club Meetings. Also, if you're ever in Nashville, please make a point to see the Belmont Mansion. See [www.belmontmansion.com](http://www.belmontmansion.com) for details, and be sure to ask them about the special "novel tour" for readers.

Incidentally, if you enjoyed *A Beauty So Rare*, a Belmont Mansion novel (the second of three in the series, the first being *A Lasting Impression*), I think you'll also enjoy *To Whisper Her Name*, a Belle Meade Plantation novel (also the first

of three in a series). I've written these two three-book Southern series to be read together, because the families in the mansions really knew one another. So understanding that their lives connected in the 1800s, it only makes sense that they should connect again...on the page of these novels.

Continued blessings—and thanks for reading!

Tamera

---

1. Eleanor Braddock is a practical, no-nonsense kind of woman. Could you identify with her character? With how she viewed herself both physically and in relation to others?
2. Adelia Acklen was a “real” person, meaning that her character in the novel is based on a woman who really lived. Adelia was an extraordinary, “born before her time” woman. What did you think about her character? About her relationship with Eleanor? Can you sympathize with Adelia’s opinions and her perspective on women’s issues and marriage? Why or why not?
3. Eleanor’s father struggles with health issues. What would you liken his disease to today, and have you ever witnessed this health struggle firsthand in someone you love? Which scenes between Eleanor and her father touched you most, and why?
4. Tamera uses a lot of garden imagery in this story. Are you a gardener? Did you identify with the imagery on both a literal and spiritual level?
5. At the beginning of Ch 16, Marcus thinks about how “every brick laid in the foundation of a life, however meaningfully or haphazardly placed, shaped the whole.” Looking back on your own life, what are some “bricks” that have shaped you as a person? Your values and goals?
6. At the end of Ch 17, Marcus reflects on what it feels like to feel far from home versus being homesick. Can you empathize with him? And the difference between the two?

7. Eleanor doesn't see herself as an attractive woman. In a conversation with Marcus, she responds, "Not everything has to be *beautiful* to be worthy of admiration." Discuss why you think she reacted this way and whether or not you've ever shared her feelings, especially in the light of the world's definition of beauty. (Pg. 196)
8. Do you like to cook and/or bake? On pg. 253, Eleanor describes how cooking and baking allows her to "be still" on the inside. Can you relate?
9. On pg. 261, Eleanor has an epiphany moment about the direction of her life. Look for the paragraph beginning with, "If anyone had ever told her that cooking..." Have you ever experienced a similar realization in God's calling on your life?
10. On pg. 268, Marcus sees a work of art that was inspired by the parable of The Prodigal Son in the New Testament. Discuss why this statue has such an impact on Marcus.
11. We often seek to be filled and to have our own needs met, when it's something else entirely that we need. Discuss how Eleanor experienced this in her character journey. What was it she needed? (Pg. 274, look for "She worked the batches of dough...")
12. We often wonder why God allows such hurt in this life, especially when it involves children. On page 280, Eleanor has some fairly accusing thoughts about God. Have you ever had similar thoughts? What does the Bible say about God's thoughts and ways (read Isaiah 55:9) and how does that relate to this story?
13. What do you think about the statement the professor made to Eleanor when she was a young woman? How would you have reacted had someone said that to you at that time in your life? How would you react now (if you're older and have gained some perspective on youth)?
14. At the end of Ch. 31, Marcus is confronted by *someone*. Have you ever felt this sense of confrontation within you? How did you respond?
15. Marcus desires to make a name for himself, to leave his mark on the world. What happens to him in his character journey? How does his

- perspective change? See pg. 360 (look for the paragraph beginning with, "Building a widows' and children's home certainly wasn't...").
16. What was the most surprising thing about this story? What character did you feel closest to?
  17. Before reading this story, had you ever heard of Luther Burbank, Dorothea Dix, or Gregor Mendel? Do you enjoy reading novels that include real people from history?
  18. In this story, two characters from the Timber Ridge Reflections series (*From a Distance, Beyond This Moment, Within My Heart*) share a cameo appearance. Did you catch who they were?
  19. Through your eyes, what was the take-away message of this story, and what events/characters in the book led you to that conclusion?
  20. What was your favorite scene in *A Beauty So Rare*, and what was your favorite passage? (Write Tamera at [TameraAlexander@ymail.com](mailto:TameraAlexander@ymail.com) and let her know!)

**Would you be willing to send Tamera a picture of your book club? She'd love to feature it on her [Facebook Page](#). Send the picture to [TameraAlexander@ymail.com](mailto:TameraAlexander@ymail.com) with your name(s), your group's name, and the city where you're located. Be sure to hold up your books!**

Tamera's website: [www.tameraalexander.com](http://www.tameraalexander.com)  
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/tamera.alexander>  
Twitter: <http://twitter.com/tameraalexander>  
Pinterest: <http://pinterest.com/tameraauthor>  
Tamera's group blog: <http://inspiredbylifeandfiction.com>  
Contact Tamera: [tameraalexander@ymail.com](mailto:tameraalexander@ymail.com)

## Recipe Ideas for Group Gatherings--

### **Eleanor's Buttermilk Pie**

2 Tablespoons and 2 teaspoons plain flour  
1 stick melted butter (or margarine)  
5 ounces buttermilk  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
2 ½ cups sugar  
4 eggs beaten well

Mix all by hand. Cook in unbaked pie shell at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes or until firmly set. Delicious!

### **Cordina's Tennessee Tea Cakes**

1 Cup butter or margarine  
1 Cup sugar  
3 eggs  
3 1/2 Cup self rising flour  
1 teaspoon vanilla

Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs and mix again. Add vanilla and flour and mix well. Roll thin (on floured board, cut with cookie or biscuit cutter. Bake at 350 for ten minutes. Don't overcook! Sprinkle with sugar while warm or ice with simple icing. Or, like a beignet, cover with powdered sugar while warm.

Note: If you want more cake-like cookies, roll thicker, about ½ inch in thickness. The thinner the dough, the more like crisp cookies they'll be.

### **Simple Icing**

2 Tablespoon softened butter or margarine  
1/2 Cup Confectioner's sugar  
2 Tablespoons milk (can add another if needed)  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
Few drops food coloring, if desired

Cut butter into confectioner's sugar. Add milk and stir until lumps are gone. Add one teaspoon of vanilla and a few drops of food coloring, stir until combined. Spoon onto cookies or tea cakes and spread with back of spoon. Top with sprinkles while still wet, if desired. Let dry before stacking.

Recipes from all of Tamera's novels are available  
at [www.TameraAlexander.com](http://www.TameraAlexander.com)

## Tamera's Complete Book List--

### Fountain Creek Chronicles series

*Rekindled*, Fountain Creek Chronicles, Book 1 (ISBN 0-7642-0108-5)

*Revealed*, Fountain Creek Chronicles, Book 2 (ISBN 0-7642-0109-3)

*Remembered*, Fountain Creek Chronicles, Book 3 (ISBN 0-7642-0110-7)

### Timber Ridge Reflections series

*From a Distance*, Timber Ridge Reflections, Book 1 (ISBN 978-0-7642-0389-3)

*Beyond This Moment*, Timber Ridge Reflections, Book 2 (ISBN 978-0-7642-0390-9)

*Within My Heart*, Timber Ridge Reflections, Book 3 (ISBN 0-7642-0391-6)

### Stand-alone novel (not part of a series)

*The Inheritance*, Women of Faith Fiction (ISBN 978-1-59554-632-6)

### Belmont Mansion novels (3 book stand-alone novels)\*

*A Lasting Impression*, a Belmont Mansion novel, Book 1 (ISBN 978-0764206221)

*A Beauty So Rare*, a Belmont Mansion novel, Book 2 (ISBN 978-0764206238)

*A Note Yet Unsung*, a Belmont Mansion novel, Book 3 (February 2017) (ISBN 978-0764206245)

### Belle Meade Plantation novels (3 book standalone novels)\*

*To Whisper Her Name*, a Belle Meade Plantation novel 1 (ISBN 978-0310291060)

*To Win Her Favor*, a Belle Meade Plantation novel 2 (ISBN 978-0310291077)

*To Wager Her Heart*, a Belle Meade Plantation novel 3 (Fall 2017)

*To Mend a Dream\*\**, a Belle Meade Plantation novella (ISBN B00PWOGZVM)

\* I've written these two three-book Southern series (**the Belmont Mansion novels and the Belle Meade Plantation novels**) to be read individually OR together (your choice!), because the families in the mansions knew one another. So seeing that their lives connected in the 1800s, it only makes sense that they should connect *again* on the page of these novels.

\*\*"To Mend a Dream" is available by itself as an ebook, or in print form in the Southern novella collection entitled *Among the Fair Magnolias* (ISBN 978-1401690731).