

**Reading Group Guide for
Christmas at Harmony Hill
by Ann H. Gabhart**

1. Heather Worth was a washer woman with the Union Army. That meant she followed the Army unit to which she was assigned. I let her be married in my story, but often these women were single or perhaps widowed. Had you ever thought about how the soldiers got clean clothes while in the field or about other everyday necessary tasks before transportation made being in the field easier for troops?
2. The Civil War was very divisive especially in Border States like Kentucky. Do you think Heather was right to follow her heart and run away with Gideon even knowing her father might never forgive her? How much would you give up for love?
3. Do you think Gideon was right to send Heather back home when she started showing that she was with child?
4. We usually think we can always go home and our family will have to take us in. This didn't turn out to be true for Heather. She faced rejection when she got to her father's house. Do you think it would have been different if her mother had still been living? Did you feel her father was too harsh?
5. Heather's mother must have suspected that her husband would act the way he did and that's why she left the letter for Heather. Was it a good idea for her to seek out her aunt Sophrena at the Shaker Village knowing how the Shakers felt about the union of marriage?
6. Sister Sophrena was already beginning to feel a few fissures in her Shaker beliefs after her experiences with Jessamine in *The Gifted*. Sister Sophrena was the Shaker journalist in that book. So how did Heather's appearance in the village change Sophrena?
7. The Shakers were known for their kindness and not turning away anyone in need of food or shelter. Do you think they hoped Heather

would consider becoming a Shaker if her husband didn't survive the war? Or do you think they were simply being generous to a woman in need?

8. Gideon was fortunate to have a close relationship with Jake in his troop. Do you think war makes men who aren't related sometimes feel like brothers or family? Have you or anyone you know who served in times of war had that kind of relationship with fellow soldiers? Someone you cared about enough to die for them?
9. Sophrena was attracted to the Shaker doctor, Brother Benjamin, even though she felt that attraction was sinful in light of the Shaker beliefs. Were you disappointed that he did not seem to return her interest? Were you glad when she ran after Heather and Gideon to go with them?
10. What do you think made Heather's father change his mind when Gideon showed up at the farm looking for Heather? Do you think he may have been sorry for the way he'd turned Heather away? Could it have been Heather's sister's prayers that softened his heart?
11. Heather had a difficult time giving birth. Did you like the way the story flashed between her with her difficulties and Gideon in battle during those scenes? Do you think that was an effective way to show the danger they were both in?
12. This was a Christmas story, but the theme of the story was forgiveness as both Sophrena and Heather had to forgive their fathers. Do you feel the need to forgive and be forgiven is a good theme for a Christmas story?