

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## *Standing on the Crack:*

### *The Legacy of Five Jewish Families from Seattle's Vibrant Gilded Age*

#### Exploring Family History and Legacy

This guide organizes thoughtful discussion questions into themes to facilitate meaningful conversation, whether in a book club, classroom, or personal reflection.

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#### Themes & Historical Context

1. What themes stood out most in this family history? How do they connect to broader historical or cultural contexts?
  2. How do migration, displacement, or changing traditions affect the family's identity across generations?
  3. The author describes five unique family narratives—despite their differences, how do they reflect universal immigrant experiences?
  4. The book focuses on Jewish immigrant families—how does their journey reflect the experiences of other immigrant groups seeking a better life?
  5. The author acknowledges that her book does not focus on Indigenous communities or non-Jewish immigrants. How does this omission reflect the challenges of personal history versus broader historical narratives?
  6. How did antisemitism shape the lives of these families? How do you see antisemitism today affecting people's lives?
  7. The author describes how her ancestors helped shape Seattle's business and cultural landscape. How does personal history contribute to the identity of a city?
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#### Personal Connection & Reflection

1. Did any particular family member's story resonate with you? Why?
2. How does the author's family history compare to your own? Are there shared experiences or cultural connections?
3. The author moved far from home to assert independence but later embraced her family's legacy. Have you had similar experiences of shifting perspectives on your own family ties?
4. The author explores how knowing her ancestry "grounds" her in time and space. Do you feel that understanding your family's history can provide a similar sense of belonging?
5. The author reflects on themes of resilience, determination, and ambition in her ancestors. Which qualities do you think define your own family's history?

6. What family stories do you hope to pass down—and why?
  7. How does this book inspire you to reflect on or document your own family history?
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### **Memory, Legacy & Storytelling**

1. What role does memory play in shaping family narratives?
  2. How does grief shape the author's journey into her family's past? Did any moments of reflection resonate with you personally?
  3. How does the process of uncovering family history serve as an act of remembrance? Can learning about our ancestors keep them alive in some way?
  4. What role does community leadership play in the family's legacy? How do you see generational values passed down in your own life?
  5. Do you believe writing family history can help keep ancestors "alive" in some way? What role does storytelling play in preserving family legacies? Does storytelling bridge past and future generations?
  6. What does the author mean by "leaving a shiny mark like a snail"? Do we all leave lasting imprints in the world, even in small ways?
  7. The author wrestles with human impermanence, stating that life is "but a blip." How does this realization shape her approach to storytelling and memory?
  8. The author argues that we all make a difference, even without winning awards or public recognition. How does this idea challenge conventional notions of success?
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### **Speculative & Philosophical Questions**

1. Were there any surprising revelations about the family's past? How did they shift your perspective on the story?
2. If you could ask the author's ancestors one question, what would it be?
3. The author asks: "Could looking backwards be another way of looking deeper into ourselves?" How do personal and historical perspectives intertwine in genealogy?
4. What stories will we choose to tell our children?