

## Book Club Questions for *A Dream of Daring*

A novel by Gen LaGreca

*These questions address issues that unfold in the story and are intended to be read after you finish the novel.*

A courageous battle for progress and freedom leads to mayhem and murder in the Old South. A shocking homicide, a forbidden love, and questions of freedom and human dignity unfold when a Louisiana cotton planter's son builds a prototype tractor to replace slave farming—and the town's planters vow to destroy him. His scandalous preference for a rebellious slave woman over a senator's daughter further inflames the townspeople.

1. Describe Tom Edmunton's character. What's important to him? What vision of the future does he see? How does he react when others ridicule his new invention? How does he symbolize the plight of the innovator who sees a future that no one else envisions?
2. Why do the planters fear Tom's new invention and the intensity with which he's pursuing his idea to transform the farming system? What motivates them?
3. How does the modern age clash with the institution of slavery? How does Tom's invention and its clash with the slave system dramatize this battle of two different world views? Explain how Tom wants to have control over nature, science, and inventions while the planters want control over people.
4. Describe the two women in Tom's life: Rachel Barnwell, the senator's daughter, and Solo, the obstreperous slave. Which one is Tom drawn to and why? Does Rachel want to break with conventionality and pursue her own dreams as Tom does?
5. What do you think of Solo? What are the qualities you admire about her? How does she rise above her station?
6. How does Jerome, Tom's house servant and his most troublesome slave, rise above his station? What qualities do you admire about Jerome? Explain the bond that forms between Tom and Jerome. How are they both innovative and entrepreneurial?
7. Do you see any parallels between the planters' paternalism toward their slaves as a rationalization for holding them in bondage and similar viewpoints on issues in today's world?
8. What does a life of holding power over people do to the masters, the presumed beneficiaries of such a system? Are the planters in the story, themselves, diminished by slavery---in their chronic fear of their bonds people? In their character and morality? And in their rejection of innovations and progress that flourish in a society in which everyone has freedom?

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