

A READING GROUP GUIDE

# THE ENTIRELY TRUE STORY OF THE FANTASTICAL MESMERIST NORA GREY

**Kathleen Kaufman**

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The suggested questions are included to enhance your group's reading of Kathleen Kaufman's *The Entirely True Story of the Fantastical Mesmerist Nora Grey*



## Discussion Questions

1. This novel is both historical fiction and magical realism. How does Kathleen Kaufman achieve her unique writing style? What details does she use from each genre? What do each add to the emotional quality of the story?
2. Both Nora and Lottie are othered by society because of circumstances and abilities. What parallels do you see between the two women, and how does each handle her obstacles?
3. The book ends with Nora choosing a life of obscurity and eschewing the fame and fortune that her abilities have brought her. What drives her to that decision, and why does she choose this path?
4. Dorothy Kellings plays many different roles with Nora: she is a nurturer, a partner, and a business manager. Discuss the complicated relationship between these two women. Where does the power dynamic lie?
5. Lottie's story of institutionalization was all too common for its day. What leads to her commitment to Argoll Asylum? Consider the sequence of events that led to her court-room appearance. Discuss what other options might have been open to Lottie.
6. Discuss the father-daughter relationship between Tavish and Nora. In what capacity is Tavish a protector? In what ways does he exploit her talents? What drives the loyalty and familial bond that lie between the two?

7. If you could ask Nora, Lottie, Dorothy, and/or Tavish any question, what would it be, and how do you think they would respond?
8. Nora Grey has to deal with the advantages and trappings of fame at a young age. How does this change her perspective on what she wants from life? Is this comparable to young celebrities in today's world?
9. What do you think happens to Nora, Dorothy, and Tavish after the book concludes?
10. If you could travel back to the historical setting of either Nora or Lottie's story, where/when would you go, and what would you do or see?