

FOLGER
**BOOK
CLUB**
SEASON 23/24



What's
your
story?

Discussion Questions: *Beheld*

Folger Book Club—November 2023

1. What are your first impressions of the novel? If asked, what would you say this novel is about?
2. What is the impact of shifting from first-person narrative to third as we move amongst the characters?
3. Were there voices you found more or less trustworthy?
4. Much of the narrative is told from the contrasting narratives of Alice and Eleanor. How does religion impact their interpretation of events? How does class? What commonalities do the two women share?
5. This book covers a familiar time period in history, and one that is particularly prevalent in November. Are there things you knew or thought you knew about Plymouth and the puritans that the novel made you reexamine?
6. On page 95, Billington reflects on the colony's relationship with the Wampanoag and their help, concluding "All things Governor Bradford would not put in writing." How important throughout this story are written accounts? Are they reliable? What does that make you think about how history is taught and understood?
7. The image of Wituwamat's head displayed by the meeting house is returned to repeatedly and is the final image of the book. Why do you think Nesbit chose to end the book this way?
8. Much of what occurs within the colony is attributed to evidence of or signs from God. How do these interpretations change depending on the speaker and the circumstance? Are there alternate ways to interpret events? How does this impact ideas of personal responsibility?
9. The Billingtons often refer to the Bradfords/puritans as "hypocrites.". Which behaviors do they see as hypocritical? Are they themselves hypocritical, and in what way(s)?
10. Dorothy is ever present in Alice's mind. What do you make of their relationship? What new information is offered through Dorothy's perspective? How does Dorothy's death comment on other themes of the novel?