



Discussion Questions: *The Fraud*

Folger Book Club—August 2026

1. What did you think of this novel? If asked, what would you say this book is about?
2. How familiar were you with the time/events of this novel? Is there any aspect of it you are now inspired to learn more about?
3. Looking beyond the Tichborne Trial what other “frauds” are apparent? Which do you think the title is referring to?
4. What do you make of the structure of this novel? Why do you think Smith made these choices? What is the significance of having “volumes”?
5. Charles Dickens appears along other literary figures as cameos. What is the effect of having such famous names as side characters? What did you think of how they were portrayed? How does it compare with some of the portrayals of Shakespeare you may have come across?
6. On page 15 Smith writes “They would move again in the spring. But what was, for William, only a matter of speaking a sentence aloud, would entail, for his cousin, many months of planning and organization.” Where else do you see these discrepancies in labor?
7. Page 132 includes a description of how various characters react profoundly to Dickens’ death. Why do celebrities inspire such reactions in us? Have you ever mourned a celebrity in this way?
8. Why was Eliza reluctant to accept the money from her late husband?
9. On page 358, Smith writes “Was he really good or did he only want to be seen as good? Did it matter?” Which do you think? And does it?
10. Many narratives are woven within this story. Which were you drawn to? Which did you struggle with? Did you wish for more or less of any particular story?