



### Discussion Questions for Eowyn Ivey's **TO THE BRIGHT EDGE OF THE WORLD**

- 1.) A major theme of the novel is how characters see the natural world in vastly different ways. How do Allen and Sophie Forrester's understanding of the world around them differ from the native tribes that Allen and his men encounter on their journey up the Wolverine River? Which worldview lines up more closely with your own experience of nature?
- 2.) The author uses letters, journal entries, newspaper headlines, and other documents from the past to tell her story. How does the novel's construction affect your reading experience?
- 3.) How do you think the expedition would have changed if Sophie were able to accompany Allen on his journey as she had originally planned?
- 4.) How do Allen's and Sophie's stories affect the lives of Joshua Sloan and Walter Forrester? Do they see their lives differently as they read about the events of 1885? Do you have any historical journals or letters in your own family that give you a front-row seat to the lives of your ancestors? If so, how have those documents changed your thoughts about your family and impacted your own life?

- 5.) The new art of photography becomes very important to Sophie. In what ways does her pursuit of art help her through a difficult time in her life? Does any art form play a similar role in your own life?
- 6.) Do Allen Forrester and his men change the environment and tribes that they encounter on their expedition, or are they the ones more changed?
- 7.) The intersection of myth and reality plays a central role in the novel. In what ways does the line between myth and reality become blurred? How do you as a reader tell the difference? And in what ways do Sophie's and Allen's stories take on the hint of myth as the years go by?
- 8.) First person narrations can at times be unreliable. How trustworthy are Allen's and Sophie's diary entries and letters? Do you think there's a difference in the reliability of the narration between letters meant to be read by another person and diary entries that an individual writes to process their own lives? Do you think all the events we read about from the expedition happened as described?
- 9.) Are there any unexplored frontiers left in the world that Joshua Sloan and Walter Forrester live in today? Are their lives poorer for not experiencing the sense of adventure and the thrill of discovery that gave shape to Allen and Sophie's lives? Does that lack of an undiscovered country help explain why they become so fascinated with Allen and Sophie's papers?
- 10.) Is *TO THE BRIGHT EDGE OF THE WORLD* primarily an adventure story, a love story, historical fiction, a mix of all three, or a different genre altogether? Why?
- 11.) Who do you see as the main protagonist of the novel—Allen or Sophie? Does the novel have a villain? If so, who, or what, is it?