

THE SECOND MOTHER: Some Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. As a young woman, suddenly widowed with a small child, Margaret had to decide what to do. Why did she make the choices she did? Would you have chosen differently?
2. What were the consequences for Hallie of her mother's choices?
3. Margaret is in many ways a solitary person, yet she is aided and inspired by several women along the way. Who are these women, and how do they help shape her?
4. In the Philippines, Margaret is part of the "civilizing mission" of the United States toward its colonial possession. To what degree do her views of the people among whom she lives and works change by the end of *The Second Mother*, and why?
5. If the economic fallout of the Great Depression had not cut short her service as a full-time rural worker, do you think Margaret would have continued indefinitely in this ministry? Why or why not?
6. What evidence is there in the story that the wartime treatment of people of Japanese ancestry had roots extending farther back than the attack on Pearl Harbor?
7. Margaret lived in a patriarchal society. Based on the people and events described in this book, how did the Church at the time reflect the prevailing views of women and their roles? To what degree does Margaret's self-understanding echo these views?
8. How did Margaret's perception of her sister-in-law change by the end of the story? How do you view Martina?
9. What role does shame play in *The Second Mother*?
10. Who in this story would you like to know better, and why?