

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

Loving Frank by Nancy Horan

- Did you know the history of Mamah and Frank before reading the book and if so, how did it affect your reading? Did you find it difficult to separate the fiction from the historical basis?
- What would you say are the themes of the book?
- The author has said that she wanted to present Mamah's line of reasoning for the decisions she made. Did you feel her to be a sympathetic character? What were some of her strengths and weaknesses? If she had lived in the 21st century how do you think things would have been different?
- What was Mamah's attraction to Frank? Did her feelings for him change over time? What did she see as his strengths and weaknesses?
- Ellen Key stated that if you attack personal character, you kill ideas and she's had to "live a careful life" as a result. Did Frank and Mamah also live carefully? How were Frank's and Mamah's reactions to the bad press they got different? Did Frank's slogan "Truth against the world" depict his attitude?
- Why did the author choose the opening quotation by Goethe: *One lives but once in the world*?
- Why was Mamah attracted to Ellen Key's teachings? How did she react to the revelation that Key believed women's first responsibility was to their children and family? Did this seem to contradict Key's other beliefs?
- Mattie and Lizzie were examples of modern women of the times. How did their choices differ from Mamah's and how did they react to Mamah's actions?
- Frank's ideas about architecture were revolutionary. Today his influence is widespread. What was meant by a "democratic architecture" and "organic architecture?" What was his attraction to Japanese art?
- It's unusual for the main protagonist in a novel to be killed. What did you think of the author's handling of this?
- What did you think of Frank's letter to the press about Mamah after her death?
- What did you think of Frank and Edwin's behavior after the tragedy at Taliesin?



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