

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Uptown and Down – Jennifer Anglade Dahlberg

1. Nora, Jeff, and Hilton come from distinct cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. How do you think their divergent upbringings influenced their life choices?
2. What role does friendship play in the novel? Explore the dynamics between Jeff and Hilton with that of Nora and her two best girlfriends?
3. Why do you think money, status and privilege are so seductive to the point where they can jeopardize long-standing ties?
4. Secrets cast a powerful shadow throughout the novel. Do you think some secrets are better kept hidden?
5. What do you make of Jeff's growing sense of social justice and responsibility? Are his values more noble than Nora's or Hilton's? Or are his wife and best friend less conflicted about their place in the world?
6. Compare and contrast the two sides of New York City portrayed in the novel.
7. Which character was the most endearing to you, and why? Which was the least likeable? What do you think motivates the actions of Nora, Jeff and Hilton in the book?
8. Marriage is explored in great length in this book. Does the novel leave you with a greater or lesser sense of optimism about marriage?
9. When Nora is devastated about her personal life, she throws herself into her work. Do you respond to stress in a similar way? What are the pros and cons of dealing with problems in this way?
10. What surprised you most about the book? Why? Were there significant plot twists and turns? If so, what were they?
11. All three characters exist in spaces where they have historically been underrepresented. Do you think this placed too much pressure on them to be "perfect?"
12. Do you agree with the ending of the novel? Is it truly possible to forgive and move on?
13. What is the significance of the title? Did you find it meaningful—why or why not?
14. What valuable lessons will you take away from this novel?
15. If the book were made into a movie, who would play each of the lead characters?