

Deborah Vogts Discussion Questions for *Snow Melts in Spring*

1. In the opening scene, we find the horse, Dusty, seriously injured on the road after being hit by a car. Mattie wants to put the gelding down because of his suffering and the expensive treatments but allows John McCray to persuade her to save him. Do you think this was the right decision? Why or why not?

2. Mattie loves the Flint Hills, almost to the point of it being an idol to her. How could she have kept this from happening? Has anything in your life threatened to become an idol to you?

3. When Gil returns to the Lightning M Ranch, he and his father immediately get into an argument, even though they haven't seen each other for a long time. How might they have resolved their family problems before they became so big, so that their suffering wouldn't have been so great?

4. Gil left the family ranch after high school to play football. This broke his dad's heart. How much did this affect Gil's inability to return home years later? Have you ever hurt someone in your family? Did you have a hard time making amends? How did you get over that obstacle?

5. Clara and Mattie are best friends. Clara gives Mattie advice on men, love, and her career. What are the strengths of this relationship? Who are your best friends? Do you find yourself giving or taking advice from them on a regular basis? What are the benefits of such a friendship?

6. Mattie and John have a close relationship as well. At times, Gil wonders if the two might be more than friends. Why do you think his dad and Mattie are so close? What does each one bring to the relationship?

7. As a star quarterback, Gil was used to being in charge and having the last say in most matters. How does that change when he returns to the Lightning M Ranch? Does he have control over his father or Mattie? Or even his future? How does that make him feel?

8. Mattie's veterinary practice struggles to survive in the Flint Hills. Is this due to the fact that she is a woman? Or does it have to do with the animals that died in her care? Or maybe it is simply God's hand in her life. How do you know if you're traveling the path God wants you to follow? What should you do when roadblocks are placed before you?

9. Gil faces retirement from a profession he's committed himself to for over 20 years. How hard do you think it'll be for him to start a new life after being a celebrity for so long?

10. Mattie has a strained relationship with her parents which stems from their overprotection of her as well as their bankruptcy and eventual departure from the Flint Hills. Though she loves them, do you think she was too hard on them? In the end, she and her dad come to an understanding. Do you think their relationship will grow from this point on? Why or why not?

11. There is a moment in the story when Gil visits with the hired hand about Gil's relationship with his dad. This is an important turning point for Gil, and it's also where the book gets its title. What advice does Jake give Gil?

12. Gil has to deal with mistakes from his past, some that are particularly difficult. How could he have managed his problems better so that such heartache wouldn't have occurred in his family? Have you ever made any mistakes in the past that you wish you could erase?

13. Mattie refuses to leave the Flint Hills for California. Some say that if you love someone, you'll do anything for them. Is this true? And if so, should Mattie have given up her dreams in order to be with Gil?

14. The boy in the hospital plays a big part in Gil's understanding of God's forgiveness. What does the boy learn and why is he able to get through to Gil when nothing else could?

15. Gil has to accept God's forgiveness as total, and this allows him to move on with his life. Do you think this happened too easily for him? What was the pivotal point for him?

16. Gil decides to stay in Diamond Falls rather than move his dad to California. Do you think his decision was the right one, or should he and Mattie have relocated to California? Why or why not?

17. Mattie's sister is the antagonist of the story. She's out to get land and money and might as well have Gil, too. Should Gil have been more understanding toward her or not? What do you think will happen when Gil & Mattie get married? Will the sister come between the two? How might they avoid family problems? Has an in-law ever come between you and your spouse? How might you guard against someone creating problems within a marriage?

18. What spiritual themes do you see in *Snow Melts in Spring*? Was there a moral to the story?

19. Who is the strongest character—Gil, Mattie, or John? Why do you think this is?