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**The Dollmaker**  
by Harriette Arnow

1. What is your first impression of Gertie? What picture of her are you left with at the end of the novel? Has she changed at all? Consider her final stunning decision. Why does she choose this course of action?
2. Gertie's sacrifices can be seen as a betrayal of her own natural, creative self. Does she also betray Reuben and Cassie? Does she have any choice?
3. Before *The Dollmaker*, Harriette Arnow (1908-1986) was regarded only as a regional writer. What do you understand by this? How well does she evoke a sense of place? What part does symbolism play in her descriptions?
4. Life in Kentucky is not easy, but how does Arnow convey that it is a good place to live? How can poverty in Detroit feel so different?
5. Who among Gertie's children adapts most successfully in Detroit? What happens when children in such situations adapt but their parents don't?
6. Consider Gertie's Detroit neighbors. How do the experiences of the women differ from those of the men? How far do you sympathize with these people?
7. Gertie muses over the nature of Judas. Does she believe that she, too, is predetermined to suffer? Does this account for her passivity?
8. Is *The Dollmaker* an American classic?