**Landscape of a Marriage**

**Book Club/Discussion Questions**

1) As a widow with three small children, Mary did not have many viable options. What do you think of her decision to marry her brother-in-law Fred? How about her goal of getting him to fall in love with her following the marriage?

2) *Landscape of a Marriage* takes place in the 2nd half of the 19th century. Despite Mary’s efforts in supporting her husband’s landscape architecture business, she never received any official acknowledgement. Do you think this was Fred’s preference or simply common for the times? How have things changed for women since then?

3) Mary’s best friend Anne Vaux played a key role in allowing us to learn much about Mary- her hopes, fears, and concerns. Anne supported Mary but challenged her when she felt Mary’s behavior was out of line. What do you think of the relationship between the women? Do you have an ‘Anne’ in your life?

4) Mary and Fred suffered the loss of two infant sons during the first few years of their marriage. Mary grieved openly and we learned how she dealt with the death of her sons. We don’t know much about how Fred really felt, other than what he told Mary directly. Do you think this is indicative of the way men and women handle loss in general or is this more specific to the time period?

5) Mary was concerned that the relationship Fred had with his colleague and friend Katherine Wormeley was having a negative impact on their marriage. How do you think she handled the situation? Should she have confronted Fred directly early on or should she have trusted him? What does this say about their marriage?

6) Daughter Charlotte had always been a bit high-strung, but after giving birth to three sons in three years, her mental state declined further and she was sent to an asylum from which she was never released. Should Fred and Mary have advocated more strongly on their daughter’s behalf? How would a similar situation be handled today?

7) Reading about the Olmsted family dynamics, how do you think they would do in the modern age? How would it impact their relationships?

8) Mary and Fred moved all over the country and traveled often for work. Which of those trips would you most want to have gone on? Which home situation would you most want to have lived in?

9) Frederick Law Olmsted (FLO) tried his hand at a number of professions- farmer, reporter, magazine publisher, merchant seaman - all before the age of 40. Do you think that marriage and a family influenced his decision to pursue a 40 year career in landscape architecture?

10) FLO created parks all over the United States, including Central Park in Manhattan, Prospect Park in Brooklyn and the Emerald Necklace parks in Boston, college campuses including Mt. Holyoke, Smith, Yale and the University of Chicago, and private estates such as The Biltmore Estate in Asheville, NC. Have you been to any of these places? Do you want to add any to your bucket list?

11) What do you think Mary would have seen as her greatest accomplishment?

12) Did you have a favorite character? A least favorite one?