



### **The Rumor—Questions and Topics for Discussion**

- 1.) A major theme of the novel is the power of rumors. How does being the subject of rumors influence the behavior of characters in the book? Do they behave differently when they are under scrutiny from their neighbors?
- 2.) *The Rumor* is told from multiple points of view. How does this technique influence where your sympathies lie when reading the novel? Which character do you think is the novel's main protagonist? Why?
- 3.) Procrastination is a way of avoiding something we don't want to face. What do you think Madeline is avoiding when she delays writing her new novel by organizing her desk drawers and searching for a writing studio in town?
- 4.) Money plays a role in Madeline and Eddie's choices throughout the book. How do you think anxieties about finances impact their decisions for better or worse? How do finances draw a wedge between friends in the book?
- 5.) When Madeline can't find a subject for her new novel, she draws from her best friend Grace's life for inspiration. Do you view Madeline's choice to draw from real life to write fiction as a betrayal of her close friend? Why or why not?

- 6.) Several different rumors circulate on Nantucket over the summer based on what the other residents of the island see of Madeline, Grace, Eddie, Benton, Allegra, Hope, and Brick's lives. Which of these rumors is the most believable?
- 7.) What draws Grace to Benton Coe? Is it his physical attractiveness or their shared passion for gardening? Has Eddie neglected Grace despite his best efforts to provide financial security for his family? Are a set of shared interests necessary to sustain a lasting, loving romantic relationship?
- 8.) Do you find Grace to be a sympathetic character? Do you feel her choices are justified? What would you do if you were in her shoes?
- 9.) Despite the differences in their ages, the parents and children in *The Rumor* are faced with similar concerns, especially when it comes to romance. In what ways do the Llewellyn and Pancik children mimic the behavior of their parents? Are there any ways in which Brick, Hope and Allegra avoid the mistakes of the adults around them?
- 10.) Everyone on Nantucket loves a good rumor (except when it's about them). What is the appeal of gossip? And why do we like gossip about others when we're upset by gossip about ourselves? Is a small town like Nantucket particularly prone to rumors?