



## The Widow's Mite by Allie Cresswell.

### Questions for Reading Groups

1. Have you, or has someone you know, been the victim of a scam?
2. Do you think scamming is a modern phenomenon? How has the internet assisted crooks and fraudsters?
3. Why do you think the writer chose not to base her story on an internet scam?
4. How much do Minnie's character and situation contribute to Giles and Phil's ability to hoodwink her? Do you think a more worldly person (Gloria, say, or Viola) would have been taken in by them?
5. Why do you think Giles and Phil wait so long before beginning to ask Minnie for money?
6. Arguably, Minnie is as much the victim of her step-children as she is of the fraudsters. What do you make of Taran and Levina's cruel behaviour? Have you known of other family disputes caused by Wills?
7. Do you think Minnie's friends, her neighbour Irene or her fellow church-members should have been more aware of Minnie's situation?
8. Discuss the dynamics of Minnie's friendship group. The women don't always seem to get along. Why do they persist in their association? Which, if any, do you think you might be able to get along with?
9. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, more than 1.5 million people in the UK were destitute at some point in 2017, living on less than £70 a week, without essentials such as housing, food, clothing or heating. A fifth of the population of the UK, amounting to 14 million people, are living in poverty. If you are British, how do you respond to these statistics? If you are not British, do you know how your country compares? Who do you blame? What should be done?
10. Minnie's poverty leads her to steal. How did you feel about this? Did you condemn or condone her actions? How far could you sympathise with her, even if you did not approve?
11. Minnie's situation brings out another quality in her—empathy for others who struggle with poverty. How did you respond to this aspect of the story?
12. Maisie Wilde is on a different trajectory to Minnie. Her husband left her well off. Compare the two story threads. How did they complement and illuminate one another?
13. Maisie's story takes place on one day, Minnie's in one year. How did you respond to the two timescales in the book? Did you feel the writer's use of two tenses aided her to delineate them?
14. The two stories collide on the driveway of Minnie's house on the evening of Maisie's party. How might things have been different if Maisie had not taken Dominic with her?
15. Dominic emerges from this encounter very well. How do you think his success and Michael's approbation will change Dominic's state of mind? Do you enjoy it when flaky characters step forward and become heroes?



16. In what ways are Maisie and Minnie the answer to each other's problems? How do you see things for them, moving forward?
17. Describe the family dynamics within the Wilde family and compare them with Taran and Levina. What about the representatives of the Harrington family; Oliver, Michael and James? How much can you deduce about their upbringing and family backgrounds? How far might this contribute to or excuse the way they behave?
18. Maisie is attracted to both Oliver and James, but in different ways. Elspeth, James's wife, suffers from advanced dementia and has been placed in a care home. How far should she be an obstacle in any relationship between James and Maisie? Oliver is a Harrington, with all the complications that entails. Would he be a safer option for her? Or, as a widow of six months, do you think it is too soon for her to trust her feelings towards either one of them?
19. Maisie loved her late husband but her marriage to him was problematic (as described in *The Hoarder's Widow*). How far might this influence her feelings towards possible romance in the future?
20. Viola and Gloria are also widows. We don't know much about Val, the lady from the farm. Gwen is a long-time divorcée; Amy is a spinster. All have stories to tell. Which one intrigues you the most?