

A discussion guide for Lynn Garson's *Southern Vapors*:

1. Are there situations and/or characters you can identify with, if so how? Consider Honey in particular. How did the somewhat unsympathetic portrayal of her affect you?
2. Did you learn something you didn't know before?
3. Do you feel as if your views on a subject have changed by reading this text? For example, the writer expresses some disdain for the contribution of the psychological community to her recovery. What was your opinion of that community before you read the text? After?
4. Did it make any difference to you that the writer was a self-described "rich kid?"
5. How did you feel about the writer airing her family's "dirty laundry" in public? Is that a social taboo that you agree with? Disagree?
6. Was there a point when you thought the writer would not survive? If so, how did it feel to be with her at that point in her journey?
7. What passage from the book stood out to you?
8. Have you had a life changing revelation from reading this text?
9. What major emotion did the story evoke in you as a reader?
10. If you could change something about the book what would it be and why?
11. Describe what you liked or disliked about the writer's style?
12. Read the following analysis of *Southern Vapors*. Do you agree or disagree? Would it make a difference to you if the author of the comment was male?

*Southern Vapors* is a story of contemporary feminism, which I call "organic feminism" to highlight the contrast with the various forms of revolutionary feminism of the 50s, 60s, 70s. In those years, feminism had the tendency to carry political overtones due to the fact that there was an overt fight for equal rights taking place. I also perceive a distinct contrast to the 80s and 90s, where while greater

opportunities existed, the “success” of women seemed still largely measured (and constrained) by the institutions and instruments of a world designed for and by men. Today’s movement strikes me as something different--more than ever as individuals’ journeys of discovery for personal identity, existing independently of the distractions and trappings and baggage from years before, and largely free of the shackles overcome by the feminist revolutionaries from years before as well. Today, I believe the expectation for many women is that the world is largely open to them, and moreover, it’s available for reshaping to reflect their unique perspectives, experiences and philosophies.

Along these lines, *Southern Vapors* takes the reader on an exploratory journey of many of the essential struggles of a woman’s search for identity that I believe are prevalent today.