

Book Club Discussion – *Then and Now: The Seductive Genius of C. D. Gibson*

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Book Introduction

Then and Now follows illustrator Charles Dana Gibson and his artwork as the Gilded Age gave way to the Progressive Era in the early 20th century. It paints a picture of a man who attempted to change his surrounding world with humor and wit through the Gibson Girl and a wide cast of characters. Battling prejudices and restrictions of the era, C. D. Gibson gave the Gibson Girl and others a voice in support of equality and suffrage while holding antiquated practices up for scrutiny. Beyond the humor of world-famous cartoons, his social satire influenced millions of men and women with timeless messages that are as relevant now as then.

Discussion Questions

1. What did you think the book was about?
2. Do you see parallels of early 20th century society with now? Which ones?
3. Before hearing about the book, were you familiar with the Gibson Girl? C. D. Gibson?
4. Did you enjoy the book? Why? Why not?
5. Did you find the life and work of Charles Dana Gibson interesting?
6. What did you think of other major characters such as his wife Irene, Richard Harding Davis, and others?
7. If you knew only of the Gibson Girl before, what is your opinion of Gibson's body of work now?
8. *Then and Now* was written with young and future generations in mind, and whether it would take another hundred years to fulfill many of Gibson's goals. Do you see that as a concern? Do you see progress?
9. While women's equality is just one segment of inequality, demographically women are the largest at greater than 50% of the population. However, do you think men should be just as interested in the history presented in *Then and Now*, as they have mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters who face similar issues?
10. C. D. Gibson was one of the most influential communicators for 30 years. Whom do you see today as carrying an equality mantle as well and effective as he did? Will that person have Gibson's longevity?
11. Why was there such a gap of a prominent social commentator after Gibson to today? Do you consider John Stewart, Stephen Colbert, Bill Maher, or even Bill O'Reilly to be in Gibson's league?
12. What experiences have you had in life that parallel events in the book.
13. Did you feel that the book fulfilled your expectations?
14. Would you recommend this book to other readers? To your close friend? To men and women alike?

Author Bio

Gary W. Clark is an author, photographer, and genealogist from Wichita, Kansas. He has published ten books, covering U.S. history, vintage photographs, photo restoration, and a military memoir. The books are available in print from Amazon.com, with most available as Kindle eBooks. His Amazon author page can be found at www.amazon.com/author/gary-clark.