

Discussion Guide for *The Detective's Assistant*

1. **Nell is delivered** to the doorstep of her long-lost aunt, and she's excited to stay with her. What would you do if you were deposited on a strange relative's stoop? How would you act?
2. **Kate Warne was hired** as a Pinkerton detective, a rare decision at the time. How is the world different today for women seeking work than it was in the 1850s? What opportunities do women have today that they didn't have then?



3. **The Pinkerton detectives went** to great lengths to solve their cases, sometimes misrepresenting themselves. Do you think they were justified in tricking people to solve crimes, as in the fortune-teller charade and the Maroney murder case where one of the operatives dressed up as the dead bank teller?

4. **Nell is thrilled to join** the detectives on their cases, despite the danger of revealing their identities. How would you feel if you were asked to dress up for a fortune-telling ruse, or as a helpmate to solve a bank robbery, or as a ghost to scare out a confession from a killer? Would you be scared or excited?
5. **Nell pays attention to** the news of the day, as well as listens to what people are saying when she's out and about. Do you have detective skills in your everyday life? If so, what are they?
6. **Abraham Lincoln entered** Washington, D.C., in February 1861 under the cover of darkness. Many people criticized him at the time, saying he acted like a coward. What do you think he should have done when he learned of the assassination plot in Baltimore? What would you have done?



7. **Nell carries a little bit of** her father – and everyone she loves – with her in her heart. She wore her father's boots to hold him close. How do you honor the people you love in your life? Do you carry a little bit of them with you everyday too, the way Nell does? If yes, how?

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details 5.2, 5.3, 6.2, 6.3; Craft and Structure 5.4, 5.6, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6; Range of Reading and Complexity 5.10, 6.10. For a printable version, [click here](#).

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