

*Eliza Scidmore: The Trailblazing Journalist
Behind Washington's Cherry Trees*

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BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Based on what you've read of Eliza Scidmore's talent and personality, how do you think her life might have turned out had she not left the Midwest at a young age? Does she remind you of any women you've known?
2. Mrs. Scidmore was pretty intrepid in her own way. What are your thoughts about the mother-daughter relationship in this book?
3. As the author notes, outsiders often grow up to be writers and "observers." What traits and influences do you think explain Scidmore's pursuit of journalism?
4. What did travel represent to Eliza? Why was she so passionate about it?
5. Given the harsh views and culturally insensitive language in some of her reporting, would you call Scidmore a racist?
6. What about a feminist? What are your own ideas about the term, and did she fit the criteria?
7. Eliza remained single, as did her brother George. Do you think she chose not to marry, or was it more a matter of circumstances? Any thoughts about her sexuality?
8. Why do you think she wanted her letters destroyed after her death?
9. Despite her record of exceptional achievement, Scidmore was all but forgotten for a century. How does this relate to what you know about women's history?
10. Do you think women today have overcome many of the gender and social barriers Scidmore faced? What lessons do you think her life holds for us in the 21st century?
11. What do you see as Scidmore's greatest legacy? Was it mostly the cherry trees, or something more than that?
12. This book covers a lot of history, as seen through Scidmore's eyes. Was there one era or place you liked best? What about favorite scenes or images?