

**Reading Group Guide for
A Fool and His Monet
by Sandra Orchard**

1. The story opens with Serena Jones thinking she should've listened to her mother. Can you recall a time when you wished you'd listened to your mother or to a friend or heeded Scripture the Lord brought to mind? Even when deep down we know we should listen, we often manage to convince ourselves that *our* way will work out okay (or that we don't care about the consequences). Do you think children (even adult children) should suffer the full consequences of their choices or be spared them as much as possible? Why or why not?

2. One of the suspects is in desperate need of money because his wife's kidneys have failed and hospital bills continue to mount as they await a compatible donor. Have you ever considered being a living donor? How about donating your organs after you die? Why or why not?

3. Although Serena has proven to herself that she can overcome or at least wrestle through her fear of confined spaces to get the job done, she remains acutely claustrophobic. Can you identify with Serena? Do you think she should be able to get over it? Do you have a fear or phobia that you haven't been able to overcome?

4. One of the museum employees Serena interviews remarks that everyone has a price, suggesting that given a strong enough incentive, any one of them could be morally corrupted to the point of stealing. Would you agree?

5. Following Serena's first unnerving undercover operation, she starts to doubt her ability to do her job. But remembering why she pursued the job in the first place—to find her grandfather's killer—renews her determination. What motivates you to persevere when the going gets tough?

6. Serena says she favors the "ignore your fears" approach to life. How about you? Do you prefer to ignore your fears as much as possible or face them head on? Do you *wish* you could deal with them differently? Why?

7. Billy explains to his cousin Zoe that men trip over themselves to help Serena because “She looks us in the eye when we’re talking to her. And she remembers our names and smiles when she uses them.” When a person treats you similarly, do you feel as if they care about you more or are more interested in what you have to say than most people? Do you try to give that kind of attention to others? Why or why not?
8. Serena paints to relax, escaping into the pure joy of creating—at least when it turns out the way she envisions. How do you relax? Do you carve out time each day or each week to refill your well? If not, what might you start doing to help restore balance to your life?
9. Nate, Serena’s apartment superintendent, quotes Henry Ward Beecher when he says, “Every artist dips his brush in his own soul, and paints his own nature into his pictures.” If you were an artist, what kind of images or elements would appear in your pictures?
10. While attempting to explain why recovering stolen art is so important to her, Serena suggests that theft of art is theft of our culture, of our collective history. She expounds on its value by quoting Stella Adler saying, “Life beats down and crushes the soul and art reminds you that you have one.” Would you agree with Serena that it’s important to preserve the world’s art and antiquities for the sake of all humanity and generations to come? Why or why not?
11. Who would you like to see Serena end up with—Nate or Tanner? Register your vote at <http://sandraorchar.com/vote-for-your-favorite/> and if you’d like, leave a comment as to why you favor your choice.