

Discussion Questions for *The Wife of Pilate and Other Stories*

The Wife of Pilate

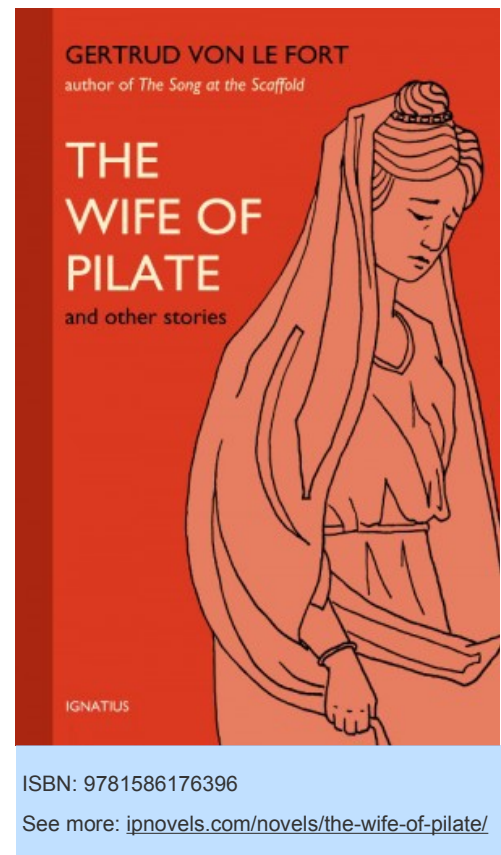
1. Discuss the relationship between Pilate and Claudia. Do you think their struggles are unique or common to many marriages?
2. How did Claudia change after her dream? How do the words “Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried” haunt her throughout the story?
3. Why do you think Claudia’s eyes cause Pilate uneasiness? What conversation between them is left unsaid throughout the story?
4. What happens when Claudia goes to the place where the Christians gather?
5. Discuss the conversation between Claudia and the assistant priest about God’s justice v. God’s mercy for Pilate. (p. 32–33) Who do you think was right and why?
6. What happens at the last meeting between Claudia and Pilate, and what does the author mean by writing, “guilt and love had found one another?” (p. 42)
7. What happens to Claudia at the end? What does her last dream mean? What is Pilate’s reaction?

Plus Ultra

1. What are the predominant themes of this story?
2. Discuss the main character, Arabella—why does the Lady Regent take her in? How does she change throughout the story? What makes her change?
3. What is the Lady Regent like? The story says that “Only great love, they used to say, met with her protection and special delight.” (p. 54) What does this mean and what does it reveal about her character? Why was the Church at Brou controversial?
4. What does the motto “*Plus ultra*” mean?
5. Why does the Lady Regent ask Arabella “Do you know what the empire means?” (p. 81) How do they both struggle with “bowing to the Empire?”
6. Why does Arabella choose to enter the convent? Discuss the ending when Arabella is present at the consecration of the Church in Brou and the funeral. What does this mean: “God accepts every love as though it were offered to him personally?” (p. 110).
7. What can this story teach us about love and sacrifice?

At the Gate of Heaven

1. What is the “Galileo Document” and why is it called that? Who reads it?
2. Describe the character of Diana—why does she lose her faith?



3. Why does the narrator think that faith and reason can be reconciled, that “one truth cannot possibly contradict another”? (p. 134)
4. Discuss the character of the Cardinal. Even though he believes in the “New Science”, he condemns the Master. What motivates him to do this?
5. What does the Cardinal mean when he says that priests sometimes disobey Jesus’ command to “let the weeds and the wheat grow together until the day of the harvest”? (p. 150)
6. Discuss the ending of the story, when the scientist says that that the Cardinal in the document was right, that he knew human nature, and that “Diana in the document could still say: Nothing is left but eternal laws and man. Today neither eternal laws nor man exists.” (p.171) What does he mean by this? Do you think this is true?