

Discussion Questions for *Mistress Bradstreet*

- 1.** Gordon says that at first Anne resisted the voyage to the New World. What are some of the reasons that Anne chose to embrace her new home in America?
- 2.** In what ways did Anne's emigration to the New World influence her development as a writer and as a person?
- 3.** Anne drew confidence and strength from her role as a mother. In fact, Gordon suggests that giving birth helped inspire Anne to become a serious poet. How is Anne's attitude toward parenting similar to modern women and how is it different?
- 4.** Which of Anne's poems do you find the most compelling? Which ones are the easiest for modern readers to understand?
- 5.** Gordon describes the dangers that intellectual women faced from other members of the community. How did Anne circumvent the jealousy and anger that other ambitious women (such as Anne Hutchinson) had to confront?
- 6.** Puritanism is a difficult religion for modern readers to comprehend. Many of us associate Puritanism with rigidity, prejudice, and intolerance and yet Gordon suggests that Anne drew sustenance and courage from her faith. How did Puritanism actually empower Anne as a woman writer?
- 7.** Anne and her husband, Simon, had a passionate relationship that inspired Anne to write some of her most famous love poems. Sadly for Anne, however, Simon had to travel frequently on the business of the new colony. In what ways did Anne's relationship with her husband help her grow as a colonial leader and a writer?
- 8.** Anne's father, Thomas Dudley, chose Anne as his favorite child and was largely responsible for her exceptional education. What impact did Dudley's choice have on Anne and on the rest of her family?
- 9.** Anne's poem, "*A Dialogue between Old and New England. . .*" helped initiate the idea that the New World was the most "righteous" civilization in the world. Instead of the traditional idea that the Old World was superior to the New, she described New England as a healthy young daughter whose duty consisted of healing her ailing mother, Old England. What role did Anne's poem play in the shaping of the identity of America?