

Discussion Questions

The Pursuit of Love

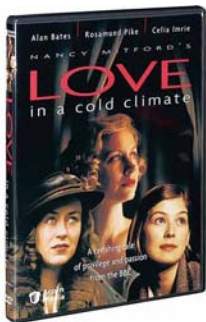
- 1 In the film version of *Love in a Cold Climate*, the screenwriter folded Mitford's two novels (*The Pursuit of Love* and *Love in a Cold Climate*) together. If Mitford had written only one novel weaving in both plot lines, would it have been a better novel?
- 2 What is Fanny's relationship to the Radlett children? What does she love about them? How is she different from them? What do they have that she envies? What do you think Linda might wish she had that Fanny does?
- 3 In the eyes of the Radletts, what makes someone "a perfect Hon"? What do "Hons" rebel against? What ideals will a "Hon" defend?
- 4 Nancy Mitford closely modeled the characters in the Radlett family on her parents and sisters. Why do you think she created Fanny and gave her the role of narrator? How is Fanny's portrait of the family different than what Linda, Jassy, or Uncle Matthew might have shown?
- 5 Mitford's novels are classified as satire, a literary style that uses humor, exaggeration, and irony to expose and criticize human failures or vices. Does *The Pursuit of Love* succeed as a satire? What does it criticize and expose?
- 6 In her characterization of her own family and class, is Mitford a harsh or a forgiving critic? Which characters receive the sharpest satirical treatment? Which characters are presented most sympathetically? What kinds of human folly do you think Mitford was willing to forgive easily? Which human failures or vices troubled her most?
- 7 Like Linda, Nancy Mitford had two unsuccessful marriages and during World War II fell in love with a colonel in the French Resistance. Do you think Nancy Mitford was cynical about the pursuit of love? In the last paragraphs of the novel, who speaks for Mitford—Fanny or her mother, the Bolter?

Love in a Cold Climate

- 1 Over the course of the novel, Fanny travels back and forth between Hampton, home of the Montdores, and Alconleigh, home of the Radletts. How does her experience in the two homes compare? How does the Radlett family serve as a counterpoint to the Montdores?

- 2 As the narrator, Fanny is at the center of the novel, but she does not play a major part in the action. Does this help her or limit her in her role as narrator? Why is Fanny's own romance and marriage reported with few details and little fanfare? How do her attitudes, her choices and her behavior serve as points of contrast to other characters in the novel?
- 3 From Boy Dougdale, "the Lecherous Lecturer," to the flamboyantly homosexual Cedric, sex and sexuality are constant undercurrents in the novel. What do you think Nancy Mitford thought of her society's attitudes toward sexuality? Is *Love in a Cold Climate* a good title for the novel?
- 4 Satire gets its bite from the exaggeration of characters' attributes and actions. Which characters in *Love in a Cold Climate* are the most exaggerated? Which scenes are the most humorous? How does Mitford use humor and exaggeration to critique the British aristocracy? Do you think her critique is a serious one, or is humor her primary goal?
- 5 Fanny observes that Lord Montdore is a perfect "type...he might just as well have been made of cardboard." Lady Montdore, for all her faults, interests her more: she "was flesh and blood all right." Evaluate Mitford's characters as Fanny judged the Montdorees. Are her characters "cardboard" or "flesh and blood"?

The Pursuit of Love and *Love in a Cold Climate*, by Nancy Mitford, was first published (respectively) in 1945 and 1949. For more about the MASTERPIECE film *Love in a Cold Climate* and related features, visit <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/climate/index.html>.



You can purchase the *Love in a Cold Climate* DVD from shoppbs.org. Enter code BOOKANDFILM during checkout to receive a 15% discount.

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