

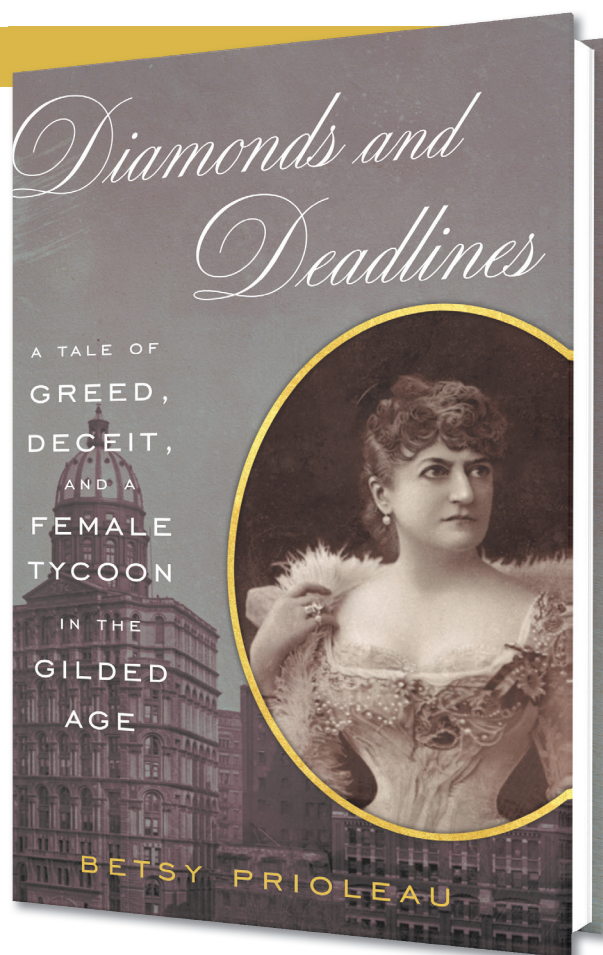
ABRAMS PRESS • READERS DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Diamonds and Deadlines is the first major biography of the glamorous and scandalous Miriam Leslie, a titan of publishing and an unsung hero of women's suffrage. Author Betsy Prioleau provides an intimate look at the life of one of the Gilded Age's most complex, colorful, and audacious heroines, offering many fascinating topics for discussion in this book. The below questions are intended to shape your book group's conversation about *Diamonds and Deadlines*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Did you know anything about Miriam Leslie before reading *Diamonds and Deadlines*?
2. What did you learn about the women's suffrage movement after reading about Miriam's life? Did anything you learn surprise you?
3. What do you think drove Miriam's motivation to support women's suffrage during her life, leading her to bequeath her fortune to the cause?
4. Miriam was a controversial public figure for the Gilded Age, to say the least: An ambitious businesswoman, a four-time divorcee, one-third of a polyamorous relationship, an adulteress, a tabloid fixture. How would twenty-first-century America feel about Miriam if she lived today?
5. Miriam excelled in a man's industry during an era when women were considered unequal and confined to the private sphere. What about Miriam led her to this success?
6. Are there any well-known modern women to whom you would compare Miriam? Who are they? What characteristics do they share with her? Discuss how these women are depicted in the media today.
7. "Do something! Spend yourself and get something for it! Make your mark and achieve success, or if need be, die in the attempt." Miriam had many rousing sayings such as this one; did any others strike you? Which ones, and why?



DIAMONDS AND DEADLINES

**A Tale of Greed, Deceit, and a
Female Tycoon in the Gilded Age**
By BETSY PRIOLEAU

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8. Miriam was once one of the most famous women in the country; why is she almost forgotten in the history of women's suffrage, while other women are celebrated? Why was she cut from the pantheon? Do you think the women's suffrage movement could have succeeded without Miriam's contributions?
9. *Diamonds and Deadlines* offers a window into Gilded Age American society in which the sights, sounds, and even scents of the age are vividly described. What was the most surprising thing you learned about this time by reading the book? Which other historical figures within the book were familiar to you, and which ones are you now eager to further explore?
10. Despite all her success, money, and fame, Miriam had a nearly compulsive need for acceptance and admiration, as evidenced by her constant efforts to be embraced by high society and receive male attention. What was behind this desire?
11. There was a steady stream of men in Miriam's life, from her marriages and affairs to her career in a male-dominated profession. Why? Was her reliance upon men solely a function of the times within which she lived? Or was romantic conquest a bid for power and control of her life?
12. Imagine an America where women did not gain the right to vote. What would society be like today?