

Book Club Discussion Questions for *American Phoenix*, by Jane Hampton Cook
www.americanphoenixbook.com

1. John Quincy Adams had to resign from the US Senate in 1808. How would you have felt if you, like Adams, lost your dream job? Do you know someone who has or found themselves down on their luck? Does this make Adams more relatable today?
2. Have you ever taken a job you didn't want? As Adams did, would you have accepted the opportunity to be America's top diplomat to Russia in 1809?
3. Louisa's father-in-law, former President John Adams, made the decision that she would leave her two oldest sons behind in Boston while she accompanied John Quincy to Russia. How would you have responded in that situation 200 years ago? How would you respond if the same thing happened today?
4. What are the differences in women's place in families and society today compared to 200 years ago?
5. How would you have felt if you, like Louisa, had to wear the same ball gown (or tux or suit) over and over again to the same events with the same guests? What would you have done? Find ways to make it look different? Borrow a dress or suit? Decline invitations?
6. What was the significance of Russia's Emperor Alexander asking Louisa Adams to dance with him at a ball at the French ambassador's mansion?
7. If Vladimir Putin, Russia's leader, asked you to dance with him at a ball today what would you say to him if you could?
8. How did Emperor Alexander show his friendship to America?
9. What were some of John Quincy's successes in Russia? What did you learn about him that you didn't know before?
10. What surprised you most about Louisa? What did you learn about her that you didn't know before?
11. What did you learn about the War of 1812 or Napoleon's invasion of Russia that you didn't know before?
12. What is similar about America's relationship with Russia today compared to how it started 200 years ago? What is different?
13. Why is this book called *American Phoenix*? Were John Quincy and Louisa phoenixes? Was America as a country a phoenix?
14. Would you like to see *American Phoenix* made into a movie? Which scene from the book would you most like to see on screen? Email jane@janecook.com if you'd love to see this on film.

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