**Some thoughts to consider regarding Gilead:**

* 1. What makes Gilead such a strong voice, even in the midst of a strolling, relatively “uneventful” narrative?
  2. Is the character John Ames “believable”? Why would she choose an aged, white pastor to be her main character?
  3. The word Gilead means: Perpetual fountain, heap of testimony, a memorial carin, a stone of witness. How is this word central to the town of Gilead (it’s essence as a community) and central to the characters as well?
  4. Names are often chosen carefully by authors, and Marilynne Robinson is a student of history and etymology. The following names each have a strong meaning behind them:
     1. Gilead
     2. John: Yahweh is gracious
     3. Ames: Friend
     4. Lila: Night; dark beauty
     5. The fact that Ames’ son is not named throughout the book

How do the names influence the meaning of the novel, the substance of the characters, and the message that Robinson is conveying through her narrative?

* 1. Take some time to look through Gilead again, and choose one of the following themes (main idea/message)/motifs (recurring object/idea) to follow and consider more closely as you re-read the novel or sections of the novel:
     1. Burnt sacrifice (immolation)/ smoke and fire
     2. Communion/sacrament
     3. Water/baptism
     4. Light/dark
     5. Life/death
     6. Wilderness/wandering
     7. Sanctification
     8. Denominationalism/spiritual heritage
     9. Connection of the spiritual and the natural
     10. Imperishability
     11. Relationships
         1. God-children
         2. God-Son
         3. Father-son
         4. Mother-son
         5. Spiritual vs. natural father
  2. Since Gilead is a novel that is utterly and completely rooted in Biblical narrative and spiritual wisdom, consider how the motif that you chose has been portrayed in the novel when juxtaposed to what the Bible has to say. What is consistent/inconsistent?