



By
Cynthia Kraack

Reader's Guide

The U.S. government created the Bureau of Human Capital Management to inventory the skills of working age citizens and assign jobs. How do you feel about this response to the challenge of returning a country to work? What do you think U.S. citizens would have to experience to accept this life?

Anne is a lonely woman who deeply desires security when she arrives at Ashwood. She has lost her family, the career she chose, and experienced significant trauma during the time of great adversity. How does she change through the story? What key decisions help her rebuild her life? How would you live the life she's been assigned?

The traditional institutions of marriage and parenthood are forced on intellectual citizen workers like the Regans, while children from disadvantaged homes may be taken from their parents and assigned to estate life. What does this say about the values of this new world? How are children valued? Women and men appear to be treated as equals in the new order. If you don't agree with that statement, what inequalities did you discover?

Family may be Anne's greatest loss. How does she change Ashwood from an employment assignment to rebuild a new kind of family?

Referencing the experience of twentieth century orphanage survivors, Anne and Terrell express concern for a future when children raised on estates are expected to parent their own children. How can a culture overcome deterioration of the nuclear family?

Ashwood would suggest that government, like many corporations, can reach a size where inefficiencies hurt even the best intentions. How does this play out?