

Discussion Questions for *Summer's Lease* by John Mortimer
(Page references are to the hardback version published by Viking, copyright 1988, 287 p.)

1. Did you like the book? If so, what was your favorite part of the book?
2. If not, why not?
3. Did any thing that happened or was said in the book stick with you?
4. Has anyone here ever been to Tuscany? Tell us about your experiences.
5. Who was the most likeable character in the book? Who was the least likeable? Who was the most interesting?
6. There are many reference to the painting *The Flagellation*, including this one on page 18:

Enthusiasts can take the trail to Sansepolcro and on, across the Mountains of the Moon, to see the sublime "Flagellation" in the Ducal Palace at Urbino, undoubtedly the greatest small picture in the world.

[Pass around the picture.] What do you think of this picture? Is it worth all the fuss?

7. The book's title comes from Shakespeare's 18th sonnet:

Sonnet XVIII.

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"

SHALL I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;
 So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Why do you think the author chose the title?

8. On p. 183, we read, "Haverford thought that seventy-seven was no age at all nowadays: being old was still safely five years ahead of wherever he was." On the other hand, on p. 187, we read of Hugh, "Unusually, he felt envious of old Haverford who, approaching death, was able to look down a long line of mistresses...." What do you think of this difference in opinion of Haverford's stage in life?
9. Any comments about the way the book ended?
10. Are there any questions you would like to ask?