

## Reading Group Questions for THE BRUTAL TELLING, by Louise Penny

1. A theme in this book, and many of Louise's books, is the difference between "truth" and "opinion." Is it always important to tell the truth, no matter how brutal it may be?
2. Was Olivier really wrong to give Madame Poirier less money for her furniture than he knew it was worth? Isn't that what we all hope we'll find at antique shops or flea markets? A treasure? Would you do differently?
3. When Superintendent Therese Brunel asks Clara what she fears, she says, "I'm afraid of not recognizing Paradise." Therese responds, "So am I." Why do you think they are both worrying about this, and can you connect such concerns to your own life?
4. How do you view the various assertions that Vincent Gilbert is a saint, especially when Gamache points out that "most saints were martyrs, and they took a lot of people down with them"? How would you feel about living with a saint?
5. For a moment Gamache himself feels the tug of greed and would love to slip one of the first editions into his pocket. What do you think of Gamache at that moment? Does it remind you of any temptations you yourself have faced?"
6. In the book Brunel and Gamache discuss where the finest example of a Haida totem pole is standing. Where is that, and what is the irony?
7. What was the final monster? The thing even the Mountain ran from, and that kept the Hermit hiding in his cabin? How do you think this applies to the various characters in the book?
8. Ruth puts Rosa into clothing. Why?
9. Was the Hermit happy, finally? Had he found peace? Could you live in the Hermit's cabin?
10. In the book Gamache quotes Thoreau's *Walden*: "I had three chairs in my house. One for solitude, two for friendship, three for society." How many chairs would you have in your house?
11. What is the role of storytelling throughout the novel? What about poetry and other forms of art, from painting to sculpture and totem poles?
12. If Three Pines existed, would you move there? How do you think the community will weather the events of this story?