

A WORLD OF CURIOSITIES

Discussion Questions

1. In the beginning of *A World of Curiosities*, we meet a young Jean-Guy Beauvoir – a very different Jean-Guy than the one we’ve come to know in recent novels. What are some of the most significant changes you noticed in Jean-Guy from his first case with Armand Gamache to the most recent one? What are some ways he’s stayed the same?

2. In the first case Armand Gamache and Jean-Guy Beauvoir work together, they meet two children: Fiona and Sam Arsenault, who both grow up to be important characters in *A World of Curiosities*. How do you feel about Fiona? About Sam? How do you feel about their relationships with both Armand and Jean-Guy over the years, and over the course of this novel?

3. The Paston Treasure – a 17th century painting showcasing a wealthy family’s collection of curios – plays a significant role in this novel. When Reine-Marie and Agent Choquet visit the original in England, the curator mentions that he plays a game with himself imagining which objects or treasures he’d add into the painting, if he could. Which elements of the Paston Treasure fascinated you the most? If you could add any of your own momentos into the painting, what would you choose?

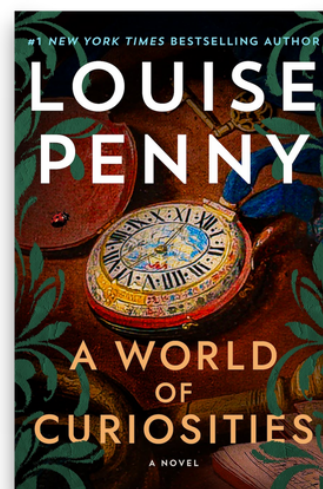
4. *Before I was not a witch*, wrote Ruth Zardo in a poem memorializing the terrible events of the Montréal Massacre, *But now I am one*. Knowing what we do now about the events of that day, why does Ruth incorporate imagery of witches into her tribute to those students? Where else does Louise include references of witchcraft and magic in *A World of Curiosities*?

5. Early in the novel, we meet two new residents of Three Pines: the pastor Robert Mongeau, and his ailing wife, Sylvie. Armand mentions that “he could see why Robert and Sylvie had fit in so well.” What about them makes him say this? What other qualities do you think it takes to “fit in” in Three Pines?

6. In one scene, the villagers gather for dinner in the Gamaches’ kitchen. Louise writes that “The final guest was Anne Lamarque, very much present, if only in spirit.” Discuss the relevance of Anne Lamarque to the village of Three Pines. Where else is her spirit present in the novel?

7. During a confrontation, Fleming accuses Armand: “I thought you were many things, Armand, but never a coward. What kind of cop doesn’t carry a gun? What kind of cop expects others to protect him?” Do you agree with this statement? Why do you think Gamache regularly chooses not to carry a gun?

Old enemies breed new danger



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8. Soon after Armand joined the Homicide unit of the Sûreté as a young officer, his first mentor gave him one short, cryptic piece of advice: Matthew 10:36. *A man's foes shall be they of his own household.* How does this verse relate to the events of *A World of Curiosities*?
9. We're used to Gamache keeping his cool during tense moments, but during his conversation with the warden of the SHU, he reacts "beyond anger, beyond rage, into a territory Beauvoir had never seen in the Chief Inspector. Gamache was losing it." What is it about John Fleming that invokes this type of reaction in Gamache? How does his loss of control make you feel?
10. *Ça va bien aller* – all will be well. Readers will certainly recognize this phrase from *The Madness of Crowds*, but Louise uses it throughout *A World of Curiosities* as well, including once as a disguised message. Where else does Louise incorporate secret codes, or hidden messages, into this novel?
11. Louise refers to a quote by W.H. Auden throughout the novel: "There's always another story. There's more than meets the eye." What does Gamache miss, in this story? And why? What role does the blind spot play in events in the book?
12. In her acknowledgements, Louise writes about exploring the idea of forgiveness, the major theme in this book. Discuss some examples of forgiveness in *A World of Curiosities*. Are there any characters you wouldn't be able to forgive?

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