



1. The history and landscape of Howl Mountain play significant roles in the book. What do you think the mountain represents to the characters Granny May and Rory?
2. Early in the novel, we are introduced to the “spirit tree” in front of Rory and Granny’s house. How might this chestnut tree—and the bottles it holds—be illustrative of certain themes in the novel?
3. Throughout the book, Rory has intense dreams, memories, and visions of his time in Korea. We know how the war changed him physically. How else do you think his experiences overseas shaped him?
4. The Korean War has been called “America’s forgotten war.” Had you ever heard of the Battle of Chosin Reservoir? Did any of the details surprise you?
5. Rory experiences a sensation known among amputees as “phantom limb.” Could this sensation be a parallel or metaphor for other feelings he experiences?
6. Granny May has what might be called a “checkered past.” Do you feel that her way of life was justified given her circumstances? Ethical?
7. The novel is divided into seven books or sections, each denoting the current phase of the moon. What role does the moon play throughout the novel?
8. People have long believed that animals and people are affected by the lunar phases. Do you believe there is any validity to this idea? Do the characters in the novel seem impacted by the changing phases of the moon?
9. Rory’s car, a 1940 Ford coupe, is named “Maybelline.” Why do you think he named the car after his grandmother?

*Discussion
Questions*



10. Speaking of Rory's relationship with his grandmother, he sometimes seems frustrated with her "truckload of lore and superstition." Deep down, however, how much of her folklore and belief system does he accept or believe?
11. Granny May has been known to call churches "godboxes," and she seems to hold a special grudge against the Presbyterians in town. Discuss the differences and parallels between traditional Christianity and Granny May's system of beliefs.
12. Serpent-handling plays a significant role in the novel. Though outlawed in many states, this practice still occurs today. Had you ever heard of people "taking up serpents"? How might worshipers interpret this practice as a test or display of faith?
13. Bonni and Connor Gaston hope that discovering a live Carolina parakeet along the river might prevent the government from flooding the valley to power the mills. Do you believe that the discovery of a rare, endangered, or thought-to-be-extinct animal should be grounds to prevent public works and construction?
14. Discuss the possible symbolism of the Carolina parakeet in the novel.
15. As the novel progresses, readers may begin to see a parallel between illegal whiskey and marijuana. Do you believe one of these practices is more or less ethical than the other? Do you believe that either practice should be legalized?
16. The early days of dirt track racing are portrayed in the book. Were you surprised to learn about the "outlaw roots" of modern stock car racing? Can you think of other sports—motorsports or otherwise—that have such roots?



17. At one point, Rory tells Granny May he worries that he has a “hollow” inside him—that the goodness inside him has “evaporated” or “frozen.” Do you think this is the case? Why or why not?
18. Toward the end of the book, Rory takes up a diamondback rattlesnake—Ornias—during a church service. In your opinion, what motivates him to do this? How are his motivations the same or different from the other worshipers?
19. Do you think that Granny May is justified in her actions at the end of the book, when Eustace comes to visit? Would your opinion differ if she had not found strychnine—a deadly poison—in the jar of brandy he was planning to give Rory?
20. What do believe is the significance of the book’s title, *Gods of Howl Mountain*? Who are the “gods” of the mountain?

*Discussion
Questions*

