



1. Clara is simultaneously elated and terrified by the long-awaited celebration of her art, while other artists throughout the novel struggle with varying degrees of success and recognition. How do you see both the rewards and the hardships of life as an artist?
2. *"I was much too far out all my life / And not waving but drowning."* How do Stevie Smith's lines apply to various characters in the story? Who seems to be drowning? Do you think they can be saved?
3. There are many old friendships in this book—from Lillian and Clara to Gamache and Beauvoir, to the relationships among people in Three Pines. How do these friendships help—or in some cases hurt—the people involved? What do you make of Clara's trip to see Lillian's parents?
4. Old grievances also play an important role in the story. When do you think that forgiveness is, or is not, possible? How much can people change?
5. *"Who could possibly be happy sitting in a disgusting church basement on a Sunday night?"* Beauvoir wonders at the AA meeting. What do you think of that meeting, and the subsequent glimpses of what Suzanne calls "one drunk helping another"?
6. Lillian particularly highlighted these lines in the AA book: *"Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead."* How does this idea recur throughout the novel, both for characters who are in AA and for others?
7. How do you regard Olivier Brulé and the villagers' differing responses to his return to Three Pines? If you have read previous books in the series, how have your impressions of the village evolved?

Discussion Questions



8. What do you think will ultimately happen to Peter and Clara's marriage? What would you like to see happen?
9. Gamache "believed if you sift through evil, at the very bottom you'll find good. He believed that evil has its limits. Beauvoir didn't. He believed that if you sift through good, you'll find evil." What do you believe?
10. Chiaroscuro, as Beauvoir discovers, "means a bold contrast. The play of light and dark." How do both darkness and light manifest themselves in the novel? How is it possible to tell the difference between genuine hope and "a trick of the light"?