



Reading Group Guide Questions

1.) Louise Penny has said that she initially set out to write *A RULE AGAINST MURDER* as a classic mystery, a tribute to Golden Age writers such as Christie and Tey and Sayers, masters of the hermetic environment. She wanted to take that form and bring it into the 21st century. As the story unfolds, in what ways does it follow—or diverge from—the conventions of traditional crime fiction?

2.) In the course of the Finney reunion, numerous parent-child relationships are explored: between Charles Morrow and his children when they were young; between Irene Finney and those now adult children; between Pierre Patenaude and his father and the staff he regards as surrogate sons and daughters; even between Gamache and his father and son. What sorts of things go wrong in those relationships, and what goes right?

3.) What about other family relationships? How do you view the interactions, past and present, among the Morrow siblings? Consider the various marriages in the book—for example, between Armand and Reine-Marie Gamache, Clara and Peter Morrow, and Bert and Irene Finney. What makes them happy or otherwise?

4.) What do you think about the character of Bean? How about the mother, Marianna?

5.) How does Louise Penny plant clues to the murder throughout the story? Which ones did you pick up, and what conclusions did you draw? Did you, like Gamache—who tells Bean he made a massive mistake—miss anything important?

6.) If you have read other novels in the series, how does it feel to step away from *Three Pines*? How does it change your view of Clara and Peter? What about Gamache, who functions much more as a private citizen here than in other books?

7.) The title of the book is taken from a conversation that occurs after the murder:

“What happened here last night isn’t allowed,” said Madame Dubois.

It was such an extraordinary thing to say, it stopped the ravenous Inspector Beauvoir from taking another bite of his roast beef on baguette.

“You have a rule against murder?” he asked.

“I do. When my husband I bought the Bellechasse we made a pact.... Everything that stepped foot on this land would be safe.”

In what ways does the Manoir Bellechasse succeed at being a refuge from the harshness of the world?

How and why does it fail?

8.) What roles do courage and cowardice play in the story?

9.) “We’re all blessed and we’re all blighted,” Bert Finney tells Gamache. “Every day each of us does our sums. The question is, what do we count?” Do you agree with Bert? What sorts of things do you count?

10.) “Paradise lost,” says Gamache at the end; “to have it all and to lose it. That’s what this case was about.” What is paradise in this story, and how is it lost?