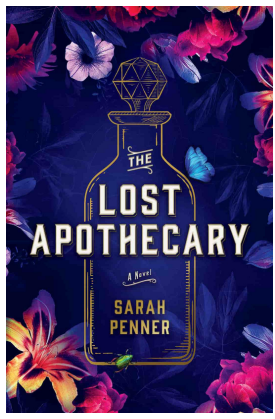


The Lost Apothecary by Sarah Penner

Book Club Questions

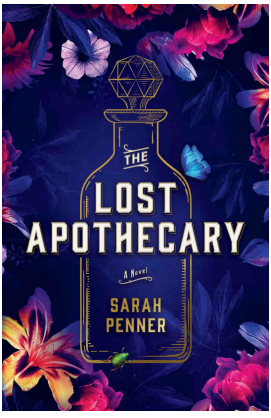
- The Lost Apothecary begins with Nella preparing poison in her shop. What was your first impression of her as a murderer? How did your opinion change after learning about her past?
- Nella's shop is a place of both healing and harm. Discuss the dual nature of her apothecary and its symbolic significance in the novel.
- Consider the ethical implications of Nella's rule about not harming women. How does this reflect on the societal values of her time and ours?
- Eliza's growth throughout the novel is significant. Discuss her journey from innocence to a more complex understanding of morality.
- Analyze the importance of the river Thames in the novel. How does it serve as a metaphor for the flow of secrets and history?
- Caroline's relationship with her husband is a pivotal part of her story. Discuss how betrayal shapes her character's development and decisions.
- The novel explores the idea of legacy. What legacy do Nella and Eliza leave behind, and how is this discovered in the present day?
- Discuss the motif of hidden things (the apothecary shop, the register, personal secrets). How does this motif drive the narrative?
- The use of poison is a form of empowerment for some characters. Discuss the paradox of poison as a means of liberation.
- Caroline's role as a historian is crucial to unveiling the past. Discuss the significance of preserving and uncovering history in the novel.
- The novel is rich in historical detail. Discuss how these details enhance the atmosphere and contribute to the authenticity of the story.
- Analyze the transformation of Nella's character from a healer to someone who aids in murder. What does this say about desperation and moral boundaries?



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- The theme of justice is woven throughout the novel. Discuss how justice is sought and achieved by the characters across both timelines.
- Explore the concept of sisterhood and solidarity among women in the novel. How does this influence their decisions and fates?
- The apothecary's register is a silent witness to many stories. Discuss its role as a character in its own right.
- The novel touches on the limitations and expectations placed on women in the 18th century and today. Discuss how these themes are portrayed.
- Caroline's discovery ties her to women from the past. Discuss the significance of connections across time in shaping identity and understanding.
- The apothecary shop is a secret known to a few. Discuss the power and consequences of keeping such a secret.
- How do the past and present narratives complement each other?
- Explore the moral ambiguity presented in the book. Is Nella justified in her actions? Why or why not?
- Caroline's discovery leads her on a journey of self-discovery. Discuss how personal crises can lead to unexpected paths.
- How does the author portray the theme of revenge? Discuss its implications on the characters and their relationships.
- Discuss the portrayal of men in the novel. Are they one-dimensional villains, or does the author provide a more nuanced view?
- How does the novel address the issue of women's autonomy and agency during the 18th century compared to the present day?



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- The novel concludes with a significant twist. Discuss how this twist affects your understanding of the characters and their actions.
- Who is the most compelling character among Nella, Eliza, or Caroline, and why do you think so?
- It seems like many readers found *The Lost Apothecary* to be underperforming compared to their expectations. What are your thoughts on this?
- What do you think about mudlarking, which involves scavenging in river mud for valuable items, before reading this novel? Would you consider giving it a try in the future?
- Finally, discuss the book's ending. Were there any loose ends you wished had been resolved? How does the ending affect your overall perception of the novel?

Notes