

## **The Plague of Doves by Louise Erdrich**

### **Discussion questions**

**July 20 – with Russ Tallchief**

1. How effective and accessible is Erdrich's nonlinear storytelling structure? Why do you think she utilizes this approach?
2. Erdrich paints the novel with rich and textured language. What are some of the most memorable passages in the story that demonstrate her prowess as a wordsmith?
3. How does Erdrich infuse comedy into an otherwise tragic narrative? What were some comedic moments in the story that exposed irony?
4. What song(s) or musical genres most effectively communicate themes in the book? How did music impact plot and character development?
5. How does Shamengwa's crippled arm reflect the disposition of the community?
6. How does the violin save Corwin Peace (and is there symbolism in the name *Peace*?)
7. How does the town's name of Pluto reflect its community identity?
8. What do the doves symbolize in *The Plague of Doves*? If you were to title the book, what would the title be?
9. How honest are the various narrators in the book? Which characters do you trust and which characters make you suspicious?
10. What is the motivation for killing the family? How is this a manifestation of social and cultural corruption?
11. What are the cultural, social, and historical influences in the judicial system? Which crimes result in justice, institutional or poetic, and which are examples of injustice?
12. How do the lies and "cover-ups" reflect community morality? Which characters display strength of character and integrity?
13. How does mixed-blood identity inform characters' values and actions? Which characters clearly identify with a Native or non-Native identity and which characters appear to be in an identity crisis?
14. How is Christianity versus Native spirituality characterized in the book? Does there appear to be partiality toward one or the other?
15. Why does the Haskell Indian Princess cut off her braids? What do her braids symbolize in a cultural and historical context?
16. What role does substance abuse play in the story? How does it impact character choices and plot development? What do you attribute Mooshum's alcoholism to?
17. What fuels characters' romantic and sexual desires? How do relationships sparked by romance evolve throughout the story? How does infidelity impact character and plot development?
18. Why does Evelina desire people that she cannot or perhaps should not love based on the social, cultural, and historical norms of the time?