



# Colorado Book Club Resource

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE SENTENCE BY LOUISE ERDRICH

1. “Louise” is the bookstore owner and also an author, perhaps “the author” of the novel. It seems very meta. Is the book meant to be somewhat autobiographical?
2. “The door is open. Go!” Tookie reads this as one of her initial dictionary definitions. How does this notion drive the narrative. Have you ever seen an open door and bolted through it?
3. 10% into the book and Tookie has already been to jail, gotten the bookstore job and been married. How did you find the pacing? Was the initial part rushed? Or was it simply meant to set the scene for the more recent events?
4. Talk about the “Indian wannabes”, as Tookie calls them. You know, the “I was Indian in a former life” or “my grandma was an Indian” tropes. Like that woman in blue who wanted to share stories of her grand whoever who helped the starving Indians (but wasn’t willing to give up the land to them)...the same woman then who later dropped off the bones.

What are these people after? What are they trying to achieve?

5. While Tookie was in prison, Jackie saved her with books. She also helped Tookie get the job at the bookstore. Discuss how Jackie was a catalyst for Tookie’s redemption.
6. Tookie’s nightstand has The Hard Stack and The Easy Stack. Do you have a similar way of prioritizing your next reads? Assuming that you have “a stack”, how do you choose your next read?
7. “So the word with its yawning c, belligerent little e’s, with its hissing sibilants and double n’s, this repetitive bumper of a word made of slyly stabbing letters that surrounded an isolate human t, this word was in my thoughts every moment of every day”... says Tookie about the definition of “sentence”

How are all the sentences in the book related? Tookie’s prison sentence, the delicious sentences within the books that Tookie recommends, and the book called The Sentence and the (nearly deadly) sentence within it which sent Tookie into a kaleidoscopic tailspin. How are these various sentences related? How do they drive the narrative?

8. Half way into the book, Erdrich gets to COVID and the subsequent BLM protests which gutted Minneapolis. Could the book have been just as effective if not set against these convulsive events?



***This discussion sheet is property of the Colorado State Library’s Book Club Resource. Please return this sheet along with all of the books in the book bag to the Colorado State Library – Courier Code C912. Contact [bookclub@coloradovirtuallibrary.org](mailto:bookclub@coloradovirtuallibrary.org) with questions or concerns.***



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9. “Five days after Flora died, she was still coming to the bookstore. I’m still not strictly rational. How could I be? I sell books. Even so, I found the truth of this hard to accept.”

Flora is a contradiction. She was a good customer, but also stole the book. She means well, dropping off potpourri, but then she’s also a clumsy appropriator of culture. She shops at the store, but later haunts it. Do you believe in ghosts? What was Flora’s role in the story?

10. Dissatisfaction is a positively voracious reader. After reading Deacon King Kong, he tells Tookie that he’s been transformed. Tookie ruminates, “That he could change because of a book brightened me up. It was the same with a lot of people who called to buy books.”

Have you ever had that moment of transformation from reading a book...or experienced the glow from having recommended a transformative book?

***Discussion questions provided by Libromaniacs.org.***



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