



Colorado Book Club Resource

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR *IN THE WOODS* BY TANA FRENCH

1. What do the woods represent symbolically in Tana French's novel? Does their significance change as the story progresses?
2. The loss or absence of stable families is a recurring motif in *In the Woods*. How do French's characters, particularly Ryan, attempt to compensate for this absence?
3. Does the Irish setting of *In the Woods* contribute significantly to the telling of the story, or do you find French's novel to be about humanity on a more universal level?
4. How does Ryan's experience *In the Woods* at the age of twelve affect his ability to function as a detective? Is it always a hindrance to him, or are there ways in which it improves and deepens his insights?
5. Cassie Maddox, Ryan's partner, is perhaps the most consistently appealing character in the novel. What are her most attractive qualities? What are the weaker points of her personality? Does Ryan ever fully appreciate her?
6. After sleeping together, Ryan and Cassie cease to be friends. Why do you think the experience of physical intimacy is so damaging to their relationship? Are there other reasons why their friendship falls apart?
7. Ryan states that he both craves truth and tells lies. How reliable do you find him as a narrator? In what ways does the theme of truth and misrepresentation lie at the heart of *In the Woods*?
8. Imagine that you are Ryan's therapist. With what aspects of his personality would you most want to help him come to terms? Do you think there would be any way to lead him out of the woods?
9. How convincing is French's explanation of the motivating forces that lead to Katy's murder—forces that come close to a definition of pure evil? Are such events and motivations ever truly explicable?
10. The plan to build the new motorway, trampling as it does on a past that some regard as sacred, is an outrage to the archaeologists who are trying to preserve an ancient legacy. How does this conflict fit thematically with Ryan's own contradictory desires to unearth and to pave over his past?
11. Do you have your own theories about the mysteries that remain unsolved at the end of *In the Woods*? What are they?
12. What were your thoughts and emotions upon finishing *In the Woods*? If this book affected you differently from other mysteries you have read, why do you think this was true?

Questions issued by the publisher.



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 with questions or concerns.