



ONE BOOK
ONE MINNESOTA



DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

The Plague of Doves Discussion Guide

1. This is a book with a large cast of characters connected by a web of relationships. How does having different narrators add to the experience for the reader? Did this have an impact on your reading, and how?

(see these family trees <https://www.readerguidetolouiseerdrich.com/index.php/the-plague-of-doves/>).

2. How does Erdrich infuse comedy into an otherwise tragic narrative? What were some comedic moments in the story? Were any ironic?

3. *The Plague of Doves* is the first book in the Justice Trilogy. How is justice carried out in the book? How do race, culture, and history have an impact on how justice is served?

4. Erdrich paints the novel with rich and textured language. What are some of the most memorable passages in the story for you?

5. What role does Ojibwe language play in the book? How does language sustain culture?

6. What is the role of Mooshum in the story? How does his storytelling have an impact on the other characters of the novel?

7. How does Marn Wolde describe her relationship with Billy Peace? How would you characterize their relationship?

8. What is the role of spirituality - both Native and Christian - in the events of the book? Discuss the various religious elements and how they drive the action of the novel.

9. Beyond the obvious, how does Evelina's understanding of herself shift when she meets Nonette?

10. Erdrich uses a nonlinear storytelling structure, bouncing back and forth between time periods. Does this help the reader understand how the present is shaped by the past? Does the story structure challenge the way you think about the progression of time?

11. Shamengwa's violin has a life of its own, or so it seems. What thematic purpose is served by the life of the fiddle and its place in Shamengwa's and Corwin's lives?

12. Most of the book is in first person, where the narrator speaks from an "I" perspective. How does that help the reader experience the events of the book? Does Erdrich use language differently when the narrator is a character telling a story and when the author is directly addressing the reader?

13. Historical trauma shows up in various ways in the story, such as Evelina's institutionalization. What other narratives illustrate the ways history is alive in the characters that people this story? How do the characters demonstrate their resilience?

14. This book resonates with important events in Minnesota history, for example the US-Dakota War. What effect does including these actual historical events have on your understanding of the book?

See these short videos for more on the Dakota Uprising

<https://www.usdakotawar.org/history/aftermath/forced-marches-imprisonment>,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIU9rNt24xw>

15. What do the doves symbolize in *The Plague of Doves*? If you were to title the book, what would it be?