

One Book One Minnesota | *Iron Lake* Reading Guide

1. Cork O'Connor is part Irish and part Anishinaabe and came to his former position as sheriff of Aurora after serving as a cop in inner-city Chicago. In what ways do his heritage and background make him suited to lead the investigation at the heart of *Iron Lake* and in what ways do they hinder his efforts?
2. The natural world, both in terms of the setting and the elements, is ever-present throughout the novel. How does the way the characters relate to the environs of Aurora enhance your appreciation or understanding of the setting? How does the setting contribute to your understanding of the characters?
3. The Windigo almost becomes another character. Does this story and tradition increase the suspense of the mystery and the tension amongst the characters? How did you react to hearing the story of the Windigo?
4. Family frictions and loyalties loom large in *Iron Lake*, with the LeBeau and O'Connor families as the clearest examples. How do these family dynamics drive the plot of – and the mysteries at the center of – this book?
5. What effects, both positive and negative, did the introduction of the Casino have on the Aurora community?
6. We discover how Cork lost his position as sheriff through a flashback. How might you have reacted if you were in Cork's shoes during the conflict over water and fishing rights? What would you have done differently?
7. Sheriff Schanno, and later Cork O'Connor, come into possession of a cache of blackmail materials which incriminates not just the story's central characters – but dozens of their neighbors in Aurora. What factors drive the choices of each man? If placed in this position, do you think you would reveal or destroy that damning evidence?
8. Cork and his daughters care for Romeo and Juliet, a pair of recuperating Canadian geese. What significance might this storyline hold, allegorical or otherwise?
9. Bestselling novelist Louise Penny has praised her colleague William Kent Krueger's protagonist as one who "walked off the page... tough, vulnerable, hardened and shattered" from his very first appearance. If you feel this to be true, what life experiences, personality traits, or narrative choices by the author contribute to the feeling?