

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

The Painted Drum by Louise Erdrich

- Was Faye right to steal the drum? How did she feel about it (p 44)? Why did she do it? (pgs. 67 and 68)
- Who are the positive characters in the book? Who are the negative characters?
- How did you feel about the portrayal of the male characters in the book? Were they realistic or one-dimensional? What about women in the book?
- Why did Elsie want Krahne to prune the trees in the orchard? Why did Faye want the orchard “unkempt, blowzy, unproductive”?
- Faye is having dinner with Kurt and thinks “there is little said about how repetitious grief is” (p 64). What do you think she means by this?
- When Simon Jack’s two wives sewed the beaded dance outfit “they enjoyed their work and found the doing of it an act of love, though not exactly love of Simon Jack.” Who was this love for? Why did they agree to befriend one another and conspire against Simon Jack?
- What “had Morris seen too much”? (p. 252)
- Animals appear frequently in the novel. What role did the dog chained to the tree (in the Eyke’s yard) play in the story? How about the ravens and wolves?
- Who was saved by the drum?
- What are some of the novel’s major themes?
- Was there redemption or healing for any character in the book?
- Did returning the drum to the reservation have any effect on Faye?
- Who was the voice that whispers warnings to Anaquot? (p.123-125, 129)
- Why did Bernard think his father’s sister had sacrificed herself (p.117)?
- What are some of the roles the dead play?
- Did the author’s writing style change with each character?
- Several characters had no names. How did this affect the reading/flow of the book? Why do you think the author included so many nameless figures?
- In what ways do the events in the book reveal the author’s view of the world?
- The book was structured with multi-voice narrators, and varied time frames. Did the author smoothly manipulate the transitions?
- Throughout the story there are phrases in German and Ojibwe. How do they contribute to the novel?
- Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why or why not? Do you want to read more books by Erdrich?



Skokie Public Library

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