Discussion questions for A GREAT RECKONING by Louise Penny

1. "The worst was coming. But so was the best. The snow angels were coming," Gamache reflects in the first chapter. Aside from evoking the chill of November, what expectations do these lines raise about the story to come?

2. What do you think of Gamache's decision to invite Brébeuf to teach at the academy? What does the invitation, and Brébeuf's acceptance of it, say about the two men?

3. In what ways is the map significant to Gamache, the villagers, and the various cadets? What significance does it have for you?

4. How do you feel about the character of Amelia? Did you see the final words in the book coming, and did they change your view of Gamache or Amelia in any way?

5. What are the most important things Gamache teaches the cadets? What does he learn from them?

6. How does the relationship between Gamache and Beauvoir evolve throughout the story? Do they generally behave in the ways you'd predict, or do they sometimes surprise you?

7. In what ways are the cadets similar to and different from one another? How did Leduc play upon their strengths and weaknesses?

8. "The innocent are often upset when the world doesn't live up to their expectations," Lacoste says of Amelia. Can you think of examples of this in the outside world?

9. Louise quotes from a poem by Jonathan Swift: "Come hither, all ye empty things,/Ye bubbles raised by breath of kings." What do you think is meant by the "bubbles raised"? What are the bubbles?

10. How do you respond to the scene in the chapel in Chapter 39, when Gamache talks to the cadets about what happened with Leduc?

11. How do the emotions of both jealousy and loyalty affect the characters' actions? In Chapter 41, what is the meaning of the line, "The friendship. The friendship"?

12. "Few writers in any genre can match Penny's ability to combine heartbreak and hope in the same scene," said *Publishers Weekly* in a starred review of *Bury Your Dead*. Did you laugh or cry at any point during *A Great Reckoning,* and if so, what made you do so?