



Reading group questions for *The Beautiful Mystery*, by Louise Penny

1. What does "the beautiful mystery" of the title refer to? What are the powers and/or limitations of music throughout the novel?
2. As we get to know the inner workings of the monastery, how do you come to regard the community of Saint-Gilbert-Entre-les-Loups and the individuals who choose to devote their lives to it?
3. To solve the crime Gamache needs "to think about the Divine, the human, and the cracks in between." How do all of these qualities manifest themselves in the story?
4. What do you see as Gamache's greatest strengths as a detective and as a man? Does he also have weaknesses?
5. How do you view Jean-Guy Beauvoir throughout the book? What do you think will become of him?
6. Because the monastery is so cut off from most methods of communication, text messages take on unusual importance for Gamache and Beauvoir. How does Louise Penny use them to convey the tone of real-world relationships?
7. What do you make of Francoeur's fierce hatred for Gamache? What does the novel tell us about good and evil, and is the distinction between them always clear? For example, see page 318, where Gamache sits through the service in the Blessed Chapel amid "peace and rage, silence and singing. The Gilbertines and the Inquisition. The good men and the not-so-good."
8. The abbot tells Gamache, "That's the difference between us, Chief Inspector. You need proof in your line of work. I don't." What role does faith play for various characters in the novel?
9. At one point Gamache finds himself wondering if the abbot's private garden "existed on different planes. It was both a place of grass and earth and flowers."

But also an allegory. For that most private place inside each one of them. For some it was a dark, locked room. For others, a garden." How might that allegory apply to particular characters in *The Beautiful Mystery*?

10. When Gamache quotes the line from *Murder in the Cathedral*, "Some malady is coming upon us," Frère Sébastien replies, "Modern times. That's what came upon the Gilbertines." Do you feel that the monks could or should have remained in isolation from the outside world forever?
11. How is THE BEAUTIFUL MYSTERY similar to/different from the books set in Three Pines?