

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

October 1970 by Louis Hamelin, translated Wayne Grady

1. When a book includes a family tree or cast list before launching into the story, does the presence of that material intimidate you as a reader, reassure you that you will have a reference point for keeping plotlines and characters organized, or is it a harbinger of a rich and varied story ahead?
2. With varied and shifting scenes, including some troubling happenings, how far into *October 1970* did you get before you felt you had found a character you could trust?
3. The novel is filled with vibrant animal imagery from beginning to end, largely depicting or connoting the harsh but sometimes ambiguous hierarchy of predators and prey. Compare the deaths and matching of adversaries in the opening scenes, between Coco Cardinal and Marcel Duquet, and between the trapper and lynx in the cabin.
4. “The mayor was a reformed sinner, incorruptible, who had built his reputation on an immoderate passion for decency and upright behaviour” (p. 64). Give two examples from the novel of how those who relentlessly seek justice were once lawbreakers or villains of one kind or another themselves.
5. “Generally speaking, women don’t appreciate any emotion that can’t be expressed with roses and chocolates” (page 109). Is Jean-Claude Marcel’s observation indicative of an overall attitude about women and how female characters are presented in *October 1970*, or are his comments the exception?
6. Chevalier Branlequeue urges his intellectual followers and assistants to examine the record and discern the truth on the FLQ crisis — the reports, newspaper articles, and so on — from a literary perspective, as if the material was as rich and full of drama as Shakespeare. Is this a valid approach to political and historical narrative? Is this what Louis Hamelin is doing with his fiction imbued version of the October Crisis?

7. *October 1970* offers examples of symbolism and mischief associated with characters' choices of names. Branlequeue's sons are named sons Martial and Pacifique, two major female characters are named Marie-France and Marie-Québec, and Sam comments wryly that "I don't call myself Nihilite for nothing" (p. 233). Give two more examples of character names that underscore themes and issues in the novel.
8. When Branlequeue observes, "Or die, like Marcel Duquet, in an accident so stupid it had to be a warning," (p. 176) is he indicating he knew it was not an accident and intended to be a specific warning from someone, or is he just suggesting it is a more a cosmic warning to all?
9. What is the significance of and the ongoing fascination with the mysterious takeout chicken delivery and deliveryman in the novel?
10. What is the importance of Marie-Quebec's theatre production, an adaptation of Camus' *The Just*?
11. The original French title of this novel is *La constellation du lynx*. How are the French and English titles both appropriate and evocative, but obviously in very different ways? Which do you prefer?
12. Even knowing the outcome of the Lavoie kidnapping — either from the true story on which the book is based or because the fictional account reveals the outcome early on — Hamelin still manage to make the sequence of events extremely suspenseful. Discuss the methods by which he achieves the tension, excitement, and even possibility of a different ending to its final moments.
13. The novel is framed by two shocking events: a murder made to look like an accident and an accident made to look like, or at least claimed to be, a murder. Both shameful, did one or both acts achieve anything for the perpetrators of each?