

READER'S GUIDE to *The Pain and The Sorrow*

1. What is your favorite scene in the novel? Your least favorite scene? What was the saddest scene? The most frightening? The happiest? Did any scene make you laugh or feel sad?
2. What are the themes of this book? Give examples supporting your answer.
3. Is the prologue necessary to the reader's understanding of the story? Why or why not?
4. What impact did Gregoria's childhood experience of sexual abuse have on her character and her responses to others?
5. Why does Gregoria's father neglect her as a child? Why does he change his attitude toward her? Do you think that his friend's confession was the only reason for his change in attitude?
6. Is Charles actually jealous of Gregoria or is it all an act? Give examples supporting your answer.
7. What role does Gregoria's garden play in the story? How important is it to Gregoria's development as a character?
8. What reasons does Gregoria give to herself to justify her staying with Charles? In your opinion, given the limited options for a woman in the 19th century, are these valid reasons for remaining in the relationship? Once she was in the marriage, what could she have done differently?
9. What strategies does Gregoria use to protect their guests from Charles' anger? How effective are her actions? What else could she have done?
10. How do the differences in the protagonist's backgrounds (Gregoria is Hispanic, Charles is American) affect their relationship? Do differences in background affect relationships today in the same way?
11. Racial differences play a role throughout the book. Identify at least two situations in which racial differences are displayed and discuss what happens and why. Would these same situations occur in the 21st century? Give examples.
12. Did you find the pacing of the story effective? Why or why not?
13. Discuss the gender roles of the two couples in the novel. How does the relationship of Alma and William Kinkaid differ from that of Gregoria and Charles Kennedy?
14. There are moments in the novel when Charles Kennedy seems almost likable: he says Gregoria is pretty like a rose, he gives her jewelry, he buys what she needs for the kitchen, he returns to help her deliver the baby. Discuss these actions in relationship to the sexual abuse and the murders and robbery. Why does Charles act the way he does?
15. The incidents involving Edward Baker and Joseph Coleman are based on Territorial Court transcripts. Edward Baker disappeared between July and September 1870. Charles Kennedy threatened Joseph Coleman with a loaded pearl-handled pistol before witnesses. Why do you think the author chose to weave these events into the story line? Does knowing that these parts of the story are based on actual events enhance the book for you? Why or why not?

16. What justification do you think Charles would have given for the way he acted toward Gregoria? For the murders and robbery?

17. What role does alcohol consumption and abuse play in the story? In your opinion, would Charles have acted the way he did if he wasn't an alcoholic?

18. Do you think Gregoria should have reported Charles before she did? At what point do you wish she'd done so?

19. Why do you think Clay Allison is so quick to go after Charles and so helpful in arguing for a trial and willing to lead the lynch mob? In some ways, Allison is as quick to anger, and as bloody-minded, as Charles. Discuss the difference between a thirst for justice and a thirst for violence.

20. Was Charles Kennedy's lynching justified? Why or why not?