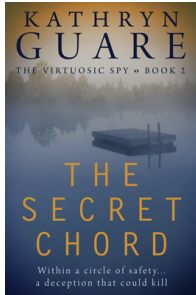


The Secret Chord

BOOK GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE



My recommendation for this guide is to make it available to the book club members in advance of your meeting, to give the participants a chance to read it and prepare some thoughts ahead of time. I would further suggest not going through the guide in strict order as a formal (and not very fun!) exercise, but just open it up for participants to choose any question they found particularly interesting and then go with the flow! Every group is different, so feel free to abandon the tool immediately if it doesn't seem useful for your members!

CHARACTERS, MOTIVATIONS, RELATIONSHIPS

Conor

1. When Conor arrives at the Rembrandt Inn, the first thing he does is burn his alias passport. (*Chapter 2/Scene 3*). Why do you think he does it, and what do you think it means?
2. After their long, book-length separation in *Deceptive Cadence*, Conor reconnects with his Pressenda violin in *The Secret Chord*, and the instrument can almost be said to develop into a character in its own right. Describe the relationship Conor has with his Pressenda, and what it means for him to be able to play it again.
3. Through nightmares, flashbacks and a very dramatic reenactment, Conor continues to be haunted by his past encounter with a small Hindu child in India. Discuss how his relationship with Jigger impacts that.

Kate

1. This book introduces Kate Fitzpatrick as a new major character in the series. What do you think about her? How do you think her unique background and circumstances have influenced her?
2. Near the end of the book, Conor shares a theory with Frank about why Kate was unable to paint for so long. Do you agree with his theory? What else might have been holding her back?
3. Frank arrives at the inn with a set of explosive photographs that turn Kate's world upside down. What do you think about her initial reaction to his revelation?

Conor and Kate

1. What do you think about the chemistry between these two characters? Beyond obvious physical attraction, why do you think they are drawn to each other?
2. Thinking of the old adage "opposites attract", discuss the character traits of these two, areas where their personalities contrast, and where they complement each other.

Frank Emmons Murdoch

1. Frank continues to be something of a cipher in *The Secret Chord*, but we learn a few new things about him. How does the revelation about his past impact your opinion of this character? What else do you think he might be hiding?

Curtis Sedgwick

1. Sedgwick makes his first appearance, this time from Kate's point of view, when he unexpectedly arrives at the inn. Discuss how these two characters relate to each other when they first meet, and compare it with their relationship by the end of the book.
2. What do you think the future holds for Sedgwick?

OTHER CHARACTERS

1. Talk about any other characters that stood out for you – either because you liked them or didn't!
 - a. Abigail
 - b. Yvette and Jigger
 - c. C. Eckhard von Hahnemann ("Professor C")
 - d. Tony Costino

THE VIRTUOSIC SPY

1. Thinking about the mention of the title phrase in Chapter 24/Scene 2, what do you think is the meaning of the title?
2. In that same scene the line appears: "*This was who he was now, and until the heavens decided otherwise, this was who he would be.*" What do you think that means?
3. Frank presents an interesting, possibly tempting proposition at the end of the book. How do you think Conor will respond?

THE SETTINGS

1. What were your impressions of these various settings:
 - a. The Rembrandt Inn and its surroundings
 - b. The Mt. Washington Hotel
 - c. The brief interlude in India (Mysore, Sravanabelagola)
 - d. Ireland (Dingle Peninsula, Conor's home)
 - e. The Great Blasket Island

THE STORY

1. Which scenes stood out for you in particular?
2. What did you like best and least about the story?
3. What do you think lies ahead for these characters?