

***The Lost Apothecary* by Sarah Penner**

Discussion questions from ReadingGroupGuides

1. At the beginning of Caroline's story, she finds the apothecary vial while on a mudlarking tour. Had you heard of mudlarking prior to reading this book? Do you believe that fate or coincidence led to her discovery? Have you ever stumbled on something that you consider to be fate?
2. Both Nella and Caroline have been betrayed by men in their lives. In what ways did the two women respond similarly to these betrayals? In what ways did they respond differently? Do you feel that one woman was more emotionally resilient than the other?
3. Nella and Eliza form an unlikely friendship early in the story, despite Nella's resistance to having the young girl in her shop a second time. Why do you think Nella eventually softened her heart toward Eliza? What drew the two characters – one on the cusp of womanhood, the other toward the end of her life – toward one another? What kind of impact did Eliza have on Nella's character?
4. *The Lost Apothecary* explores the idea of female empowerment and rebelling against a man's world. In what ways did Nella, Eliza and Caroline empower themselves? Do you consider *The Lost Apothecary* a feminist book?
5. *The Lost Apothecary* is paced purposefully so that the truth about Nella's fate is slowly revealed over the course of the story. What techniques or literary devices did the author use to "drip-feed" this information and maintain the book's suspense?
6. Discuss the meaning of the title, *The Lost Apothecary*. In your opinion, which character is the real "lost apothecary"?
7. Which of the three characters – Nella, Eliza, or Caroline – did you find the most compelling or enjoyable to read? Why?