



Book Club in a Bag

Discussion Questions

“Live By Night” by Dennis Lehane

1. “Live by Night” begins with Joe Coughlin in a tub of cement surrounded by armed men on a boat heading out to sea. How does this opening foreshadow the story that unfolds?
2. Joe, the youngest son of Thomas Coughlin, a high-ranking member of the Boston Police Department, was born into a socially respected and accomplished family. How did he fall into a life of crime?
3. Talk about Prohibition America as it is portrayed in “Live by Night.” Do you see any similarities with twenty-first-century America? Why does Joe thrive in this world?
4. Joe's first boss, Tim Hickey, tells him, "the people we service, they visit the night. But we live in it. They rent what we own." What is the "night"? What is the significance of the title “Live by Night”?
5. Throughout the story, Joe insists that he isn't a gangster, he's an outlaw. How does he define each? Do you think they are different? If Joe isn't a gangster, who is?
6. Thomas Coughlin gives Joe his beloved pocket watch. Why? What significance does the watch hold for both father and son? Do you think Joe will pass the watch down to his own child?
7. How does Joe's life change when he meets Graciela? What draws the two together? Does she remind him of Emma? What does she offer him that the night does not?
8. Joe occasionally dreams of a panther. What does the animal represent and when does it appear to him?
9. Religious revivals and bootleg liquor were embraced throughout the 1930s. What draws people to either or both during hard times like the Depression?

The above questions were taken from HarperCollins Canada. Live by Night: Book Overview. <http://c36efb0e77d3f603c85f-e0a47ada9ef95f2c97a4e2339424967d.r45.cf2.rackcdn.com/reading-guides/RG-9780060004897.pdf>

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