

Discussion questions for *Glass Houses* by Louise Penny

1. Most courtroom novels begin with a clear identification of the victim and the accused, but Louise Penny conceals that information for much of the book. What is the impact of this unexpected structure?
2. Gamache's relationships with multiple colleagues, from Beauvoir to Barry Zalmanowitz to the judge and others, take surprising turns in the course of the story. How do your views of those relationships change from beginning to end?
3. The weather is almost a character in many of Louise Penny's novels, and serves a particularly important function here in establishing time and place. What are some of the most striking scenes in which weather plays a significant role?
4. With the robed figure dominating the green in Three Pines, "The villagers were pushed to the edge. Edgy." How did the presence of that figure make you feel? By the end of the novel, how do you view the role of the *cobrador del frac*, both ancient, as conceived by Louise, and modern?
5. Gamache, Beauvoir, and the Crown Prosecutor are obviously men, but there are also many powerful women in *Glass Houses*. Who are these women, and how do their perspectives resemble and/or stand out from those of the men?
6. Chapter 3 tells us, "The officers in that room were the foundation upon which a whole new Sûreté du Québec was rising. Strong. Transparent. Answerable. Decent." How does that passage and/or other elements in the story resonate with the title *Glass Houses*?
7. What do we learn about Ruth in this book, and how does it influence your view of the profane old poet?
8. When Armand, Clara, Myrna, and Reine-Marie discuss the Milgram experiment in Chapters 25 and 26, they wonder if they would have administered the final shock. What do you think they – or you – would have done in that situation?
9. There are many points at which Louise misdirects the reader about characters and plot developments in this story. What were the most shocking twists for you?
10. How do you see the significance of the lemon meringue pie (here and in earlier novels if you've read them)?

11. Early in the book, Judge Corriveau recalls that Gamache paraphrased death-row nun Sister Prejean during another trial: “No man is as bad as the worst thing he’s done.” How might that apply to the characters in *Glass Houses*?
12. How do you feel about what happens with Isabelle Lacoste?
13. “There is a higher court than courts of justice and that is the court of conscience. It supersedes all other courts,” says Gandhi. In contrast, Ruth argues, “It’s generally thought that a conscience is a good thing. But how many terrible things are done in the name of conscience? It’s a great excuse for appalling acts.” Where do you stand on the significance of conscience and its costs?
14. In her Author’s Note, Louise says, “Some might argue that Three Pines itself isn’t real, and they’d be right, but limited in their view. The village does not exist, physically. But I think of it existing in ways that are far more important and powerful. Three Pines is a state of mind.” In what ways does Three Pines exist for you, both on the page and in real life?