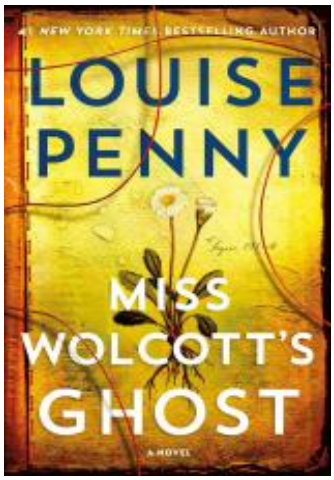
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

Miss Wolcott's Ghost

by Louise Penny



About the Book

Armand Gamache returns!

?There?s a body in Lost Nation.?

?Where?? demands Armand as he scribbles on the pad by his bed.

But the line goes dead before Chief Inspector Gamache can question the caller.

The head of homicide for the Sûreté du Québec has no idea where Lost Nation is, or who woke him in the small hours of the morning at his home in Three Pines. What he does know is that the man was terrified.

And so Armand is thrust out of a deep sleep and into the surrounding forests in search of the mythical Lost Nation. And a body.

When he and his team of Jean-Guy Beauvoir and Isabelle Lacoste find both, the situation only grows more bizarre. The unidentified dead man appears to be from an era more than a century old. He?s lying in a long-abandoned cemetery, on top of a grave with a date but no name.

Adding to the mystery, the early morning call appears to have come from Gamache?s friend and neighbor, Clara Morrow. While she denies any knowledge of it, it becomes clear there is some connection between her, the Morrow family, and Lost Nation.

Soon, Gamache and his team are faced with tracking down not just the legend of Lost Nation, but a lost ship, lost documents belonging to an eccentric Victorian botanist, and a mysterious plant not seen in a century, that might save, or take, countless lives.

As the murder investigation deepens, nightmarish spectres from the past begin to haunt the Sûreté officers, only heightened by the appearance of one of Gamache?s former and now disgraced protégés, with whom he must form an uneasy alliance.

As the ghosts begin to gather, Gamache, Beauvoir and Lacoste, with the help of Reine-Marie, Clara and the other villagers of Three Pines, realize that the body on the grave is far from the only death. To solve the crime and avert catastrophe, they must look to rancid secrets and old lies no longer dead and buried.

Discussion Guide

1. Botany and gardens are central themes in MISS WOLCOTT'S GHOST. In the book, Myrna, an experienced gardener, tells Reine-Marie: ?Do what you want. A garden should be an expression of who you are, no one else.? Do you have a garden? Do you feel that your garden is an expression of who you are?

2. Daisy Wolcott is a complicated, fascinating character. As a child, she was described as ?smug? and dismissive of her maid, also named Daisy. But as an adult, Louise writes that ?Miss Wolcott?s travels took her all over the world. But unlike her peers, her male contemporaries, she didn?t harbor contempt for the peoples she encountered, most of them Indigenous. Far from it.? What did you think about Daisy and her actions over the course of her life? Do you think that the adult Daisy would have treated her childhood maid any differently?

3. The language of flowers plays an important role in MISS WOLCOTT'S GHOST. What are some examples of flowers and plants being used as symbols and messages in the book? Did you learn anything about the meanings of these plants that surprised you?

4. Readers of the series will be very familiar with the Morrows: the wealthy, difficult family of Clara?s late husband, Peter. In MISS WOLCOTT'S GHOST, we learn more about Thomas Morrow, Receiver of Wrecks during the time of the *Empress of Ireland*. After learning the truth about Thomas, does Clara?s perception of the Morrow family change? Does yours?

5. The company Réunion describes themselves on their website as follows: ?Using state-of-the-art technology combined with good old-fashioned investigative skills by our professional teams, we repair and make whole your family tree. Reuniting families and restoring deep roots and strong limbs.? What did you think about the mission of this company and their methods? Do you think their services are ultimately a good thing for their customers? Have you done any research into your own family?s genealogy?

6. The sinking of the *Empress of Ireland* was a real event that claimed more passenger lives than the sinking of the *Titanic*, but the characters in the novel had never heard about it before. Before you read the novel, had you ever learned about this tragedy? Why do you think it?s less well-known than other large shipwrecks?

7. Throughout the story, there are flashbacks to a standoff between the Sûreté and a dangerous gang at a fast food restaurant, involving a young agent named Gaston Comeau, whose described cowardice put Gamache and many others in danger. How do the actions of that day change how Jean-Guy sees Comeau? How Gamache sees him? Do you have any sympathy for Comeau?

8. Every time Jean-Guy drifts off to sleep in MISS WOLCOTT'S GHOST, he dreams that he?s on board a sinking *Empress of Ireland*. What do these dreams reveal about Jean-Guy?s deepest fears? Why do you think the story of the sinking ship affects him as profoundly as it does?

9. This novel begins with a phone call --- ?There?s a body in Lost Nation? --- leading the characters to learn about the historic community lost to time. Gamache compares Lost Nation to Three Pines, thinking that Three Pines is ?a place only ever found by accident. By people lost. It was, in many ways, its own lost nation.? Do you think that what happened to Lost Nation could happen to Three Pines? Why or why not?

10. In the novel, Daisy Wolcott?s important contributions to botany and science are minimized and ignored because she?s a woman. Louise writes that ?in another time, Daisy Wolcott would probably hold a named chair at Cambridge, running the department of plant sciences.? Compare Miss Wolcott?s career to that of another woman, over a century later: Dr. Aimée Lagacé, the head botanist at the Montréal Botanical Gardens. What similarities did you notice between these two women? What differences? What do you think Miss Wolcott would have thought of Dr. Lagacé?

Author Bio

Louise Penny is the multi-award winning author of the Chief Inspector Gamache novels, set in her home province of Québec, Canada. Her books, including STATE OF TERROR written with Hillary Rodham Clinton, have sold more than 18 million copies worldwide, topped international bestseller lists, including the *New York Times*, and been translated into 32 languages.

The recipient of both the Order of Canada and l?Ordre national du Québec, her country?s highest civilian honours, her Three Pines Foundation reaches out to those in crisis and offers financial and emotional support, with a special focus on literacy as well as dementia care. Her husband, Michael, died of dementia in 2016. She lives with her Golden Retriever Muggins in a village south of Montréal.

Miss Wolcott's Ghost
by Louise Penny

Publication Date: October 20, 2026
Genres: Fiction, Mystery
Hardcover: 416 pages
Publisher: Minotaur Books
ISBN-10: 1250412609
ISBN-13: 9781250412607