

Discussion Questions for *Under the Cajun Moon*

1. This novel is titled *Under the Cajun Moon*, which was taken from a line of a poem in the story. Were you surprised when you learned how it related to the mystery? How could this title apply to the story in other ways?
2. In the beginning of the book, Chloe wakes up in a strange hotel room and doesn't know how she got there. How would you have reacted in a similar situation? Did you realize before she did that the police weren't so much protecting her as they were detaining her?
3. Given the nature of Chloe's character, why do you think working in the field of etiquette appeals to her so?
4. As the daughter of two self-absorbed parents, Chloe grew up feeling like an outsider in her own family. How has this impacted her life in other ways, as a child and an adult?
5. In your opinion, what was it about Chloe that first attracted Travis to her when they were teenagers? What does he find to love about her now?
6. What are the similarities and differences between Chloe's relationship with her father and Jacques relationship with his? Did you find yourself comparing the two relationships as you read?
7. The subtext of gold, treasure, and true value is woven throughout the story. Do you think Jacques had a good grasp on what was really important in life? How did his occupation as a goldsmith lend credence to his value system?
8. How does Chloe's longing to belong to something bigger than herself come into play with her burgeoning relationship with Travis?
9. Julian Ledet uses gumbo as the basis for his recipe/puzzle. How does this choice relate to the history, culture, and people of New Orleans? Did you find the treasure hunt enjoyable? Did you use Google Earth or a similar program to explore the coordinates of South Louisiana yourself?
10. So often, swamps get a bad rap in fiction as being creepy, evil places where monsters and/or backwoods psychotics dwell. After reading *Under the Cajun Moon*, has your opinion of swamps changed at all? Would you like to visit a Louisiana swamp?
11. Why do you think Travis withheld the existence of TJ from Chloe? How would your reaction have compared to hers? When she learned the truth about TJ, was she too quick to suspect Travis of other misdeeds, or were her suspicions justified?
12. In the climax of the story, Travis' injuries render him essentially helpless, making it necessary for Chloe to take charge of the situation. Did you find his situation emasculating, or were you impressed with his ability to swallow his pride and let Chloe

save the day? What does Travis' attitude in that crisis—not to mention his sense of humor—say about him as a man?

13. Though hunting and fishing figure into the story, the author takes no stand for or against these actions. Were you disappointed that the moral implications of hunting and/or fishing were ignored, or were you relieved that the story wasn't used as a jumping-off point for a discussion on such a hot-button issue, or did it simply not cross your mind? What fiction have you read that dealt with a divisive issue such as hunting and/or gun control, and was it done in an effective manner?

14. As a child, Chloe wished she was Sam and Eugenie's daughter. What needs did they fulfill in her? What needs did she fulfill in them?

15. How did you feel when you learned at the end of the story that Julian Ledet had lost his ability to smell and taste? Did that fate seem justified—or cruel? What could be the positive implications of such a sad situation?

16. In the story, Travis shares his thoughts about the character and nature of God with Chloe. Did you find her spiritual journey in this story believable? In the past, how had her relationship with her earthly father impacted her relationship with her heavenly father?

17. While in France, Jacques' father talks of his son becoming a Master Goldsmith, but Jacques' attitude about his lack of artistic talent is far more pragmatic. Later, in the New World, Jacques uses his metalworking skills to forge farming tools instead. Does this seem to be a more fitting occupation for him? How is this shift symbolic of the freedoms available to those who came to this country?

18. Jacques is very opinionated about the miserable state of New Orleans when he first arrives. Before reading this book, were you aware of the dubious nature of many of New Orleans' earliest citizens, such as the high number of deported criminals, prostitutes, and the insane? How did those origins impact the evolution of the city and what it has become today? Given the city's issues, particularly after Katrina, why do you think people continue to live there?

19. As you read this book, did you learn anything new about Cajuns that you didn't know before? If you read Mindy's book *Whispers of the Bayou*, did the historical information from that book contribute to a deeper understanding of Cajun culture in this one?

20. Chloe remembers an incident with her father where she accidentally burned a roux. Why is this revisited in a different way at the very end of the novel, with Travis? Were you satisfied with that ending?