

ICE LAND

Questions For Book Groups:

Kinship and loyalty were the lynchpins of ancient Icelandic society. Who among the book's main characters is most loyal to their kin? What is more important to these characters than kinship? And what has displaced kinship in our own culture?

Nature, geology and the physical landscape play an important role in this book, as they do within Iceland itself. Is the natural world friend or foe to these characters? Does the land itself function as a character in the novel? Or is it merely a backdrop against which events unfold?

Dvalin makes an unorthodox Darcy. Were you drawn to him? What other examples in fiction are there of unlikely heroes who win our admiration?

Ice Land could hardly be described as fantasy or science fiction, and yet it contains elements of both. What was your response to the book's mythic elements? Is there a role in modern fiction for adult fairy tales?

At times within the world of Norse myth, gods behave like children and men behave like gods. Can this also be said of the Greek and Roman mythic traditions? What does it suggest about the role of myth and divinity within Western cultures?

The adoption of Christianity in Iceland occurred much the way it is portrayed in the book. Is there a scenario under which our own society might be forced to undergo such a religious transformation? What circumstances might bring this about? And what form might it take?

Much of what we know of ancient Viking society is based on the Icelandic Sagas: stories recounted around fires for several centuries before they were ever set down on paper. Historians are divided as to whether we can trust these tales as evidence of how people actually lived. Should oral histories be treated as fact or fiction?