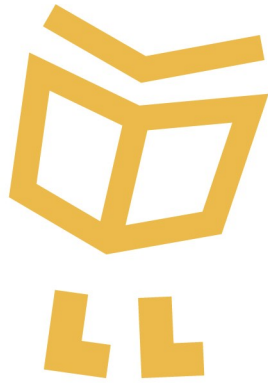


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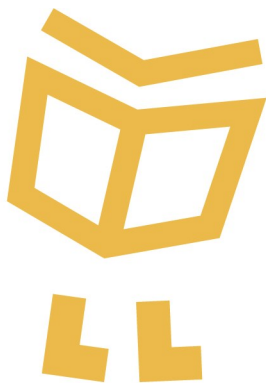
The Night Watchman Louise Erdrich

Discussion Questions

1. What qualities define Thomas Wazhushk? In what ways is he like the muskrat he was named for? What, in addition to the jewel-bearing plant, does he watch and guard?
2. In what ways is Rose valuable to Thomas and the rest of her family and community?
3. Watching the stars one night, Thomas is struck by the opposing natures of his first and last names. What do they represent? How is he able to integrate them into an identity or not?
4. Why does Patrice love to chop firewood? What does it say that she arranges it in a beautiful pattern?
5. What is Zhaanat's "deep knowledge"? Why has it been important to protect it and her from outside influences such as boarding school?
6. What is it about Zhaanat's "unusual hands that frightened some people"?
7. Patrice comes to believe that most people treat the concept of God "in a childish way." What does she mean? Why might such an approach be limiting or problematic? What is her understanding of the "nameless greatness"?
8. What is the role and importance of laughter throughout the burdensome struggles of the novel?
9. What explains Patrice becoming "inhabited by a vengeful, roiling, even murderous spirit"? How might this be helpful to her?
10. Consider one of the final images of the novel, Thomas dreaming of muskrats, asking them his name, placing the paper it's written on in his mouth, and the "bones tipped and staggered, assembling into forms" across the prairies. What do all these powerful images suggest about Thomas and his people?



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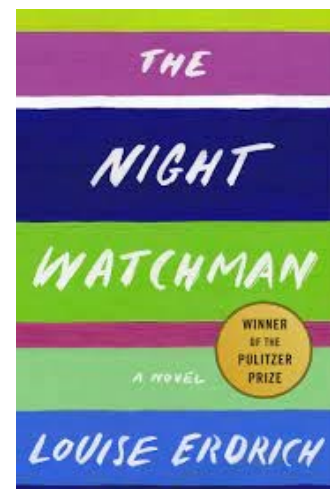
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About the Author

Louise Erdrich, a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, is the author of many novels as well as volumes of poetry, children's books, and a memoir of early motherhood. Her novel *The Round House* won the National Book Award for Fiction. *Love Medicine* and *LaRose* received the National Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction. Erdrich lives in Minnesota with her daughters and is the owner of Birchbark Books, a small independent bookstore. Her most recent book, *The Night Watchman*, won the Pulitzer Prize. A ghost lives in her creaky old house.

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