

Nocturne

by Syrie James

READING GROUP GUIDE

- 1) In *Nocturne*, the two main characters are the only two characters in the novel. Why do you think the author chose not to include any other characters in the story? Have you ever read a novel like this before?
- 2) Why do you think Nicole and Michael argue so much at the beginning of the novel? Have you ever felt attracted to someone and yet felt the need to disguise it with a cold or uncaring attitude? If you did, why did you make this decision?
- 3) Do you believe in true love? Why or why not?
- 4) What do you think is it about being injured and snow-bound with a dangerous person that piques people's imaginations? A decade ago, people were compelled and terrified by the blockbuster novel and movie *Misery*. What do you think is it about the fear of being cared for by a monster (human or inhuman) that fascinates us?
- 5) Both Michael and Nicole are accomplished pianists. Why do you think the author chose to make music such an important part of the novel? And what do you think it is about the nocturne in particular (a short, lyrical piece of music of a dreamy or pensive character especially for the piano) that is so important to the characters' love story?
- 6) Could you be attracted to someone like Michael, even if you knew how many times he had killed in his life and how dangerous he was to everyone around him? Have you ever been attracted to a person that your friends or family have thought was bad for you? How did you handle that situation?
- 7) Nicole and Michael fall in love very quickly. Have you ever had a romance like this where you fell in love so quickly and intensely? Was it short-lived or did it turn into an enduring relationship?
- 8) Discuss the scenes that explore Michael's back story. Were you surprised to learn he had been a doctor years ago? What was your reaction to learning about the massacre Michael was involved with during the Civil War? Do you generally trust doctors, or do you fear them? Discuss your feelings.
- 9) Have you ever been skiing or to the Colorado mountains? Do you think you could live in isolation the way Michael does, when the surroundings are so spectacular? Or are you too social?

- 10) Forbidden love is one of the most enduring themes in great literature. What other great love stories have you read? Compare and contrast *Nocturne* with them.
- 11) Have you ever experienced the kind of loneliness Michael has? Has there ever been a time in your life you wished you could just pick up and move away from everyone you know?
- 12) Discuss Nicole's emotional growth throughout the novel. How would you describe the crisis at the heart of Nicole's character?
- 13) Nicole and Michael make a heartbreaking decision at the end of the book. Do you really believe this is the end for them? How do you think they could make this relationship last if they were to get back together? The more creative answers, the better!
- 14) The two lovers only spend four magical days together and yet both of them are utterly transformed by their time together. Have you ever had a transformative experience? What was it? Discuss what you learned.
- 15) If you were Nicole, do you think you could have gotten on that plane and left the love of your life behind you? Why or why not?