Questions for Reading Groups

We hope you enjoy discussing these questions. The file **dc-characters.pdf** provides background on the characters, historical and fictional. —DH

01. The story emerges from four actions: Lee asks Joe to lead an investigation; Henry asks Grace to come and help; after a ten-year absence, Grace agrees; and Joe consents to let Grace serve as river guide. What motives, evident and secret, impel these events?

02. Joe is a lawyer and investigator, able to examine bits of evidence and find cause-effect patterns. But certain liars can fool him entirely. Why?

03. Grace is quick, intuitive, learned, and bitter. What are the sources of her frustrations?

04. At first, Lee Loi is cheerful, self-centered, and cocky. What are the sources of his confidence? Why are his views so conventional?

05. A refrain in Joe's life is *How much of that is true?* The recurring answer: *As much as you want it to be*. Why are the crimes at Deep Creek so important to him?

06. On the return journey to Deep Creek, we learn that Grace has second sight and strange abilities. How does this side of her affect relations with others, especially Joe?

07. When and why does Lee begin to change? What role does he play after the river trips?

08. When do the three investigators truly become a team?

09. How do the Chinese miners behave, as individuals and as a group? Are they strange, alien, or clannish, as their detractors claimed? What aspects of their lives are most surprising?

10. Duty and honor take many forms. Is Joe a patriot? Is Jackson? Is Grace a good daughter? Is Nell? Why will Dow and Yap never break their promise to Elder Boss?

11. Why is Libby Leland so calculating and controlling? Why is she so successful?

12. Why is Blue Evans such a natural leader of men? What were his motives at Deep Creek?

13. How would Vollmer tell this story? How would Libby?

14. Why are so many of the characters wanderers, or exiles? What makes a family?

15. After the trial, each character experiences a process of compensation. Explain.