

"Truly unforgettable."

—national bestselling author Sophie Littlefield

THE
LEMONCHOLY LIFE
OF
ANNIE ASTER

A Novel

Scott Wilbanks



Reading Group Guide

1. If you had Annie's time portal, when and where would you go?
2. Who is your favorite character in the novel? Why?
3. Imagery adds depth to the written word in literature. There are several repeating images in *The Lemoncholy Life of Annie Aster*, one of which is that of a crow. What do you think the crow might represent? Did you notice any other significant images? What might they mean?
4. Roses, particularly, have been a bonanza for symbologists throughout history. What do roses represent to you? What do you think the roses that appear behind Annie's house represent?
5. Déjà vu is defined as the illusion of having previously experienced something. Christian fears that he may have met Edmond before but doesn't remember. In the end, did he experience déjà vu, or was it more complicated than that?
6. As a society, we are undeniably judgmental about drug abuse. Did your impression of Edmond change when you became aware that he struggled with drug addiction? Why or why not? Do you think drug addiction is a disease or a choice?

7. Cap'n was shocked by how the world treated her when she lost her family and home. Fabian said that homelessness and poverty made her invisible to the world, because otherwise people would have to "face their own pettiness." Do you think that is a fair comment?
8. "I'm not proud of what I done, but pride ain't really something I can afford." Cap'n says this after admitting to Annie that she steals, and her point is clear. While she is mindful that theft is wrong, she's not going to suffer too many scruples about it when her survival is at stake. What is the measure of this sin (stealing) when it is held up against survival? Whose sin is greater: Cap'n's for stealing, or society's for creating the circumstances that forced her to steal?
9. *The Lemoncholy Life of Annie Aster* is, at its heart, a novel about five misfits—Annie, Elsbeth, Cap'n, Christian, Edmond—that explores the concept of marginalization through their experience. What do you think were the qualities or circumstances that led to each of the protagonists' marginalization?
10. Edmond says, "It's not sin, what's inside you. I promise you, it's not." His comment addresses one of today's hot-button topics—homosexuality as a sin. Is it?
11. Do you think homosexuality is a choice? Does the fact that LGBT youth are four times as likely to attempt suicide as their heterosexual counterparts (eight times as likely if they've experienced rejection from their family) affect your determination as to whether or not homosexuality is a choice?
12. Does our concept of what constitutes sin evolve over time

as we gain a better understanding of the forces behind it?
(Example: slavery.)

13. In the novel, the author toys with the concept of fate as a physical force of the universe, not unlike gravity. Just to make things complicated (he loves complications), he stirred in two other powerful forces—love and time—binding the three together. Which of these three forces—love, time, or fate—played the greatest role in uniting Annie and El? Which of these forces played the greatest role in uniting our other protagonists?
14. Danyer is a figment of Mr. Culler's imagination that allows him to do evil without feeling the weight of guilt or the need to take personal responsibility for his actions. Basically, Mr. Culler blames Danyer for his own bad behavior. What are some common scenarios in which people blame others in order to deny personal responsibility today?
15. Courage and sacrifice often go hand in hand. Annie begs Christian to find his courage and be true to himself, and he does, but he has to sacrifice everything he was taught to do so. What other acts of courage did you find in the book, and what sacrifices did they require?