**The Lost Apothecary**

**By Sarah Penner**

1. When you first learned that Nella was a murderer, how did you view her? How did your feelings change over the course of the book as more of her past was revealed? Did you believe she would eventually find redemption?
2. At the beginning of Caroline’s story, she finds the apothecary vial while on a mudlarking tour. Had you heard of mudlarking prior to reading this book? Do you believe that fate or coincidence led to her discovery? Have you ever stumbled on something that you consider to be fate?
3. Both Nella and Caroline have been betrayed by men in their lives. In what ways did the two women respond similarly to these betrayals? In what ways did they respond differently? Do you feel that one woman was more emotionally resilient than the other?
4. Nella and Eliza form an unlikely friendship early in the story. What kind of impact did Eliza have on Nella’s character?
5. When James feels a cold coming on, Caroline points him to the eucalyptus oil in the hotel bathroom but she doesn’t tell him it’s for topical use only. While reading, did you consider the possibility that Caroline purposely didn’t tell him the oil was for topical use only?
6. James is a nuanced character. At different junctures in the story, he shows remorse and heartbreak, only to later lie again to his wife. Did you believe he was truly sorry for his infidelity, or were his apologies to Caroline yet another form of manipulation?
7. While alone in London, Caroline begins to consider how very different her life might have been if she’d not remained in the States with James. What aspirations did you used to have that you might someday like to revisit or pursue?
8. Which of the three characters—Nella, Eliza, or Caroline—did you find the most compelling or enjoyable to read? Why?
9. In the historical note, the author states that “in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the largest population of accused poisoners consisted of mothers, wives, and female servants.” Did this statistic surprise you?
10. Discuss the meaning of the title, The Lost Apothecary. In your opinion, which character is the real “lost apothecary”?