

Death Comes for the Archbishop
Book Club Discussion Questions



1. Why does Cather start the novel in Rome? How does this contrast against the rest of the novel?
2. What is the relationship between Catholicism and indigenous religions that the bishops encounter on their travels? How does Cather portray the indigenous people?
3. Cather was never a Catholic but actually grew up in the Baptist church and later became a member of an Episcopalian church in Red Cloud, Nebraska. What does this novel show about Cather's thoughts on Catholicism?
4. Place plays an important role in Cather's works. Instead of the Nebraska prairie she grew up on, the Southwest was a disparate setting for Cather's novels. How are travel and displacement portrayed in the novel? How is religion connected to these two ideas?
5. How do the people that Father Vaillant meets in Colorado differ from the people in New Mexico?
6. How do the two themes, reclamation and preservation, connect to different parts of the novel?
7. What are some Catholic themes and messages that Cather uses? How does she subvert or reinforce these?
8. How do Father Vaillant and Father Latour compare? How do they compare to the other Catholic bishops that Cather depicts?
9. Cather described this as a "narrative" rather than a "novel." Why do you think she felt like making the distinction? How do the episodic parts fit together?
10. Cather often depicted pioneer families farming and living on the frontier. Is this a frontier story?
11. Historically, there have been strong relationships between art and Catholicism. How does Cather capture those parallels throughout the novel? More generally, what connects art and religion so closely?

12. Although not set in the pastoral prairies of the Midwest, Cather still relies heavily on nature. How is nature treated when the bishops are traveling around the Southwest? Does this change when Father Latour retires and works in his garden?
13. *Death Comes for the Archbishop* was met with critical acclaim and is often regarded as one of Cather's best works. What aspects have made it such a lasting and impressive novel?