

DARK RHAPSODY by Helaine Mario

The Big Picture

—How do different people handle grief and loss? How do these characters find a way to move on? How does the personality of each character as much as the loss suffered determine which path is taken? (*Note: you might not want to begin with this question since many clubs report that it takes over the whole evening.* 😊)

—The author says, “I wrote the book that I wanted to read. That means writing about something that I love --- classical music. In *The Lost Concerto*, and in *Dark Rhapsody*, it is music that sets the story apart, music that tells Maggie’s story.” Does the author succeed? What are you passionate about? What would YOU choose to write about?

—What is your definition of courage? How was Maggie courageous? Hannah?

—The author says, “While there are many moments in life that we cannot change or control, I know that it’s how we deal with what happens to us that matters. This is when we learn who we truly are. This always will be a theme in my novels. **The heart of my story is about how we move on.**” What do *you* think are the themes of the book? Are they fully explored?

—How do the choices that we make shape our lives?

About Characters

_The author says she wants to write deeply felt and complex characters, characters who resonate long after the last page. Did you care about the characters? How have the characters changed by the end of the book?

—Do you feel close to any of the characters? Which ones? Why?

—What did you think of Finn? His character, his choices, Maggie’s complex feelings about her father? Why did he do what he did? Did you respond to the deepening familial connections?

—Maggie is a 48(ish) woman. How does her maturity dictate a different story than if she were childless or younger? Did you enjoy a story about a more mature woman?

—Gigi and the Cardinal are brand new characters, chosen by the author in part to explore aging, guilt, faith and redemption. What did you learn from them? Feel?

—How has his war experience shaped the colonel? Did Shiloh give him the humanity he needed?

—What is your opinion of Dane? Is the history the author shares an explanation for his behavior or an excuse for it? (Most of Dane’s history is given in *The Lost Concerto*. Did you feel you learned enough about him in *Dark Rhapsody*?)

—What did you think of Sugar and Hannah’s romance? Shiloh and Jac? Would you have included more explicit sex scenes (for the humans...☺) or did you enjoy the old-fashioned romance?

About Plot

—Was the plot contrived or formulaic – or believable?

—Did the author give us too much, too little, or just enough background on the topics of music and looted art?

About Settings

—The author believes that an unusual or evocative setting can greatly enrich the story or scene, sometimes even becoming a ‘character’ in its own right.

—Did the ‘less well known’ settings in New York City add to the story? The Lipizzaners in Vienna? The lanes of old Salzburg? Backstage at the theater? How did the settings add color, mood or emotion to the story?

—How did you feel about the flashbacks to WWII? Did they enrich the story as a whole?

And finally

—Which scene resounded the most deeply with you in either a positive or negative way?

—Why did the author end the book this way?

—Will you read future books by this author, or recommend her books to a friend?

* * *

Note: many of these questions are the same as for *The Lost Concerto* because Maggie and the Colonel are major characters in both books. But more questions specific to *Dark Rhapsody* have been included, since your members may not have read *The Lost Concerto*, which began Maggie's story.