

THE LUMBY LINES

Reading Group Guide

About this Guide

The synopsis, proposed topics for discussion and author biography that follow are designed to support and enhance your group's discussion of Gail Fraser's engaging novel, The Lumby Lines. Comments and suggestions are invited by the author at www.lumbybooks.com.

About this Book

When Pam and Mark Walker, a couple of "East Coasters," purchase the fire-ravaged Montis Abbey with the intent to convert the historic landmark into a country inn, the residents of Lumby, a quirky one-moose town in the Northwest, look on with suspicion. As work begins, the Walkers face the open hostility of the cranky old newspaper publisher with a dark secret, and the sometimes helpful, often humorously hapless assistance of the local tradespeople. The monks of Saint Cross Abbey return to their former monastery to lend a gentle hand, a pink flamingo shows his flare for fashion, and a mysterious benefactor leaves unsolicited checks in a century-old journal. The benign mayhem and full array of personalities come to life through in snippets from the local paper, *The Lumby Lines* which offers an endearing glimpse into small town living and the extraordinary moments of ordinary life.

For Discussion

1. After reading The Lumby Lines, many often want to reserve a room at Montis Inn and escape to Lumby because the town appears to represent a better time when life was easier, people were more honest and communities were closer. What are the endearing qualities about Lumby that you're attracted to? And, how can we all find a quality of life that Lumby embodies?
2. How does the cover painting enhance your vision of Lumby?
3. What does Montis represent to the various characters in the book; the Walkers, William Beezer, the monks of St. Cross Abbey, Joshua, Charlotte, and the residents of Lumby? How do their perceptions change as the story progresses?

4. How do the newspaper clippings from The Lumby Lines enhance your perception of the town and its residents? And, based upon your personal experience, how do smaller town newspapers reflect the quirkiness of the communities that they cover?
5. The townspeople voice diverse reactions to the “East Coasters” after the Walkers purchase Montis. Were there reactions expected and justified? Is there a majority opinion? Who stands against the majority and comes to their support and why?
6. Hank is a beloved character in The Lumby Lines. How does he support the main plot and, more importantly, who’s managing his wardrobe?
7. The Green Chile is a prominent setting in the novel. What role does it play in the story, and what function does that type of locale fill in a town such as a Lumby?
8. The theme of transition, both life and career, is prominent throughout the novel; Pam leaves her corporate surrounds, the Walkers embark on a new life at Montis, and Brooke closes her architectural firm to join her friends in Lumby. How does each of the characters deal with change and what do each take away from the transition(s) they go through?
9. Which characters captured your heart as the novel progressed?
10. Although the reader never directly hears William Beezer’s voice, he significantly influences the story and the other characters in Lumby, especially his son. What are your feelings about William? Do you think Dennis Beezer ever finds peace about his father after the accident? And Brooke deeply regretted never meeting William Beezer although all indications were that he was a nasty fellow - what would she have said to him?
11. The monks of Saint Cross Abbey overcome dire financial challenges with the help of a close friend and advisor (Pam Walker) and profitably launch a new business. What choices and compromises did they make along the way to ensure the rum sauce success? In retrospect, might they have had any regrets about their business venture?
12. Mark’s unbridled enthusiasm occasionally runs amuck, but how has his enthusiasm helped in the different aspects of his life?
13. Pam and Mark Walker have very different philosophies in life: “Pam...knew how fragile the balance was between happiness and tragedy, and how there are very few times in life when all of the levers were up: when the bills were paid, the dogs were fed, her husband and friends were healthy, and the tomatoes were ripe. But she also knew that in a split second one of those levers could trip, and adversity would rush in and flood their lives. That was one of the reasons she married Mark; he always unconditionally believed that the levers would stay up indefinitely, permanently. She so envied the freedom that that optimism gave him.” How do two very different people complement each other as well as strengthen their marriage?

14. When do Brooke and Joshua each come to the realization that they need each other and want to be together?

15. Joshua said, “I don’t think we’re limited to one purpose in life, or if we are, we need to walk different paths to realize it. We could be given an endless number of slates on which to write our own fate.” What is your belief in destiny?

Stealing Lumby
The second novel in the acclaimed Lumby series
Coming May 2006

The small town of Lumby town is jolted from its comfortable obscurity when a world-famous painting of its two barns disappears and the national media comes calling in an effort to solve the mystery. Things go from bad to worse when one of the barns itself goes missing, and the town’s residents set about trying to decide what to make of it all. Some see dollar signs in all the attention, but others just want to get things back to the way they’ve always been; there is, after all, the Summer Solstice Moo Doo Iditarod to plan for. Faithful readers will recognize old friends, enjoy meeting new ones, and relish all the antics as the story unfolds—as pieces of the stolen barn show up in the strangest of places, a schooner goes sailing down Main Street, and the famous artist recreates his masterpiece in a way that surprises all.

The Bounty of Lumby
Coming Spring 2007

There’s even more to enjoy in the next humor-packed installment of the Lumby series. The growing numbers of readers taking the not-so-sleepy little town to their hearts won’t be disappointed with the new stories author Gail Fraser has to tell about its colorful characters and their escapades.

It all started out as a silly scheme by Lumby’s two troublemaking teens, but now the town is committed to hosting a national hot air balloon festival in twelve short weeks. And then they discover that the hosting community is also expected to make and pilot the lead balloon. Lumby’s worthies take up the challenge, wreaking a little havoc along the way as test models suffer various unfortunate fates. Two strangers come to the rescue but one brings his own brand of charismatic mischief to the scene, involving several locals in a wildly romantic real estate venture. As the festival approaches, the monks of Saint Cross Abbey, now nationally known for their good works, struggle to deal with the masses of devotees—and more than a few nutcases—flocking to take up residence on the monastery grounds, and the Walkers make a fascinating and puzzling discovery while digging an ornamental fish pond to help spruce up Montis Inn for the coming visitors.

These and other entertaining developments — and some deeper insights into familiar characters — lead the way to the very day of the festival as Lumby’s amazing entry, *The Bounty*, joins the gorgeously colored throng of participants. The delightfully

unexpected conclusion is just one of the store of riches *The Bounty of Lumby* offers the growing number of readers who have taken the little not-so-sleepy town to their hearts.

As she has proved in the first two Lumby books, Gail Fraser knows how to take endearing characters and set them in motion with a plot that keeps the pages turning. She reveals new depths in old personalities and continues to fill the Lumby universe with funny, quirky, moving and just plain lovable folk whose stories are just waiting to be told.

About the Author

Gail R. Fraser, author of *The Lumby Lines* (Aug 2005) and *Stealing Lumby* (May 2006), continues to work full time on her six-book series about the extraordinary small town of Lumby and the humorous, benign mayhem surrounding it. Prior to changing her life and becoming a novelist, Gail had a successful corporate career holding senior executive and upper management positions in several Fortune 500 and start-up corporations, and traveling extensively throughout the world. She studied at the University of London, earned her BA at Skidmore College and completed her MBA at the University of Connecticut, with graduate work done at Harvard University. Married to artist, Art Poulin, Gail is also an avid potter, gardener and cook. Art and Gail live with their dogs, Emma and Yoda, in the rural landscape of upstate New York. You can visit Gail at www.lumbybooks.com.