

Title: *Death Comes for the Archbishop*

Author: Willa Cather

1. How would you describe the mood of this book? -How does the Prologue set the scene for the story? (For example, when deciding whom to appoint: *The new vicar must be a young man, of strong constitution, full of zeal, and above all, intelligent. He will have to deal with savagery and ignorance, with dissolute priests and political intrigue. He must be a man to whom order is necessary – as dear as life.*)
2. Describe the friendship between Jean Latour and Joseph Vaillant. How essential is their relationship to the book as a whole? Compare/contrast their characters. In your estimation, who is the more priest-like?
3. Magdalena's story is one of the more memorable in their early travels, and she then recurs throughout the book. What impact does her character have on the priests? On the reader?
4. Is this a Catholic book? What does it have to say about the greater theme of faith? Are there aspects of religion (or those who profess to be religious) that are portrayed in a negative light?
5. Was the mission of the priests one of service, conversion, or something else? Did they make a difference? How would you characterize the ways in which the priests interacted with their communities? With individuals?
6. Did you respond to the vivid descriptions of settings, of landscape, of nature? Were there any that stood out especially?
7. What was the prevailing attitude toward Americans? Was this justified?
8. What did you think of Cather's decision to use several historical names and figures in her story? Does this add credibility? How satisfied are you with the title? Why do you think it was chosen?
9. Cather considered this book to be her best and most important. Even if you haven't read other works, do you see significance?
10. Cather once wrote, "When people ask me if it has been a hard or easy road, I always answer with the quotation, '*The end is nothing, the road is all.*'" What do you think of that statement in general? Is this sentiment effectively illustrated by *Death Comes for the Archbishop*? (Joseph Valliant's road; Jean Latour's road; the Navajo's road, others...)

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