

A Better Man Discussion Questions

1. The central conflict of *A Better Man* rests on the question of what we would do for the ones who we love: "What would you do if...?" "How would you feel if..." How did these questions influence the decisions that Gamache makes in the investigation into Vivienne's death? Jean-Guy? Should they have done things differently? Would you?
2. When the art critic Dominica Oddly visits Three Pines, she's initially skeptical, calling it "a little on the nose...pretty but banal." But the longer she spends there, the more she starts to change her mind. How does this change in perception relate to shifting attitudes about Clara's art? What does Clara learn about herself from Dominica's visit?
3. Throughout the book, different characters quote a line from *Moby-Dick*: "All truth with malice in it." What do you think this phrase means? How does it relate to the story?
4. The social media humiliation of both Clara and Gamache -- #MorrowSucks and #GamacheSux -- is often presented together in the beginning of a chapter. How are these social media campaigns similar? How are they different?
5. The tension of the investigation is amplified by the Bella Bella's rising shores: "Until this day, the villagers had considered the Bella Bella a friendly, gentle presence. It would never hurt them. Now it was as though someone they thought they knew well, someone they loved and trusted, had turned on them." How does the Bella Bella serve as a metaphor for the human relationships in this story?
6. Clara and Carl Tracey are both artists. In what ways are they alike, and in what ways are they different?
7. When Gamache returns to the Surete, he is demoted to Chief Inspector of Homicide, the same job currently held by Jean-Guy Beauvoir. The leadership thinks that Gamache "would never agree to this position, that the humiliation would be too great" -- but he does. What do you think of Gamache's decision to return to the Surete under these circumstances?
8. Throughout the book, Louise will sometimes refer to Homer as "Vivienne's father," instead of by name. How does this affect how we think of him and his actions throughout the story?
9. The idea of authority comes up a few times in the book, from Madeline Toussaint at the head of the Surete, to Jean-Guy and Gamache at Homicide, to Ruth leading the sandbagging effort as chief of the volunteer fire department. How do these different characters handle their positions of leadership? What are the similarities between their approaches, and what are the differences?

10. How did your perception of Bob Cameron change throughout the novel? Of Agent Cloutier? Of Carl Tracey?

11. At the end of the novel, the true identity of the person behind the @dumbass account is revealed. Do you think what she did was right? Why or why not?

12. When Gamache was Chief Superintendent, he hung a framed poster in his office of the Latin words *Noli Timere*: be not afraid. And although the office now belongs to Chief Superintendent Toussaint, the poster still hangs in the same office today. What do these words mean to you? How do they influence the characters' actions throughout the story?