

BROTHER WOLF

BY ELEANOR BOURG NICHOLSON

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

ONE-WORD REVIEW: Start off with your one-word review of the book or a section of the book. (Nice way to get everyone's reactions on the table.)

MOST MEMORABLE SCENE: What was the most disturbing, terrifying, haunting, or simply memorable moment in the novel?

FATE IS IN YOUR HANDS! Consider the fates of these characters. Are you satisfied? Would you change any of those fates, and, if so, how?

DADDY ISSUES: Talk about fathers in *Brother Wolf*: good fathers, bad fathers, and indifferent fathers. How do the failures or virtues of fathers impact the spiritual vulnerability or mental health of their children? (Biological and spiritual fathers are fair game here!)

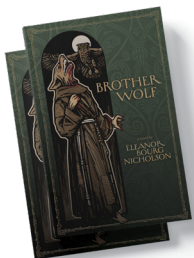
THE GOTHIC "MIRROR": In Gothic novels, the preternatural monster serves as a distorted mirror in which the protagonist (and the reader) can see the inner monstrosity of sinful, fallen mankind. What temptations and sins are revealed in the mirror (or mirrors) of *Brother Wolf*?

THE NARRATOR: Storytellers can be active agents in the novel or merely observers who produce a narrative for our benefit. How much active agency does Athene have in terms of the central tensions of *Brother Wolf*? What else does she contribute as narrator? (You could also consider how this novel would play out if it were written as a third-person narrative or with someone else as the narrator—e.g. Isabel, who was the original narrator.)

ISABEL'S MOTIVATIONS: What are the motivations of Isabel? Does she have a character arc or does she remain static?

MYTHOLOGY: What ancient myths are most frequently represented in the novel? What themes do these illuminate?

LYCANTHROPY: What sort of affliction is lycanthropy, as presented in *Brother Wolf*? How much does it owe to the preternatural and the occult, and how much can it be understood as a form of addiction? How redeemable are the werewolves, and of what must their redemption consist?



SPIRITUALITY: Nicholson's previous novel, *A Bloody Habit*, had a strong emphasis on the theological virtue of faith and, more generally, the strength of goodness in overcoming evil. What are the focal virtues and spiritual concerns of *Brother Wolf*, and which characters represent them?

DOMINICANS AND FRANCISCANS: How are the charisms of the two Orders represented in the novel, and what do representatives of each bring to the battle against preternatural evil?

THE OCCULT (AND MONEY!): What is the hierarchy of evil in the novel? Whence comes occult power to individual characters? (Athene suggests you draw a chart to outline the relationships.) What does money have to do with any of this?

BEST CHARACTER: You are doomed to a lengthy train ride with one of the characters. Whom do you choose, and what will you discuss on your way from your starting point to the Antipodes?

MOST-HATED CHARACTER: You're a prisoner of your most-hated character. How will you escape from this loathed person?

THE GOTHIC: Are you a reader of the Gothic? What Gothic elements are at play in *Brother Wolf*? These elements might include: presence of the preternatural, bad weather, strong passions, suspenseful situations, fainting damsels in distress (who would probably be in less distress if they were fully informed of the dangers at play), deep moral quandaries, dangerous but exotic foreigners, strong Catholic aesthetic (often counterbalanced by anti-Catholicism), references to other Gothic works, and violence (possibly redemptive). (N.B. Unintentional hilarity is also characteristic of the Gothic, though the author of *Brother Wolf* confesses that the humor is intentional.)

