



BOOK CLUB

LASALLE'S GHOST

A NOVEL BY **MILES ARCENEUX**



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BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

1. In Mile's Arceneaux's first book, *Thin Slice of Life*, the story revolves around the clash of cultures that occurred when war refugee Vietnamese immigrants moved to the Gulf Coast. What are the culture clashes you see in *La Salle's Ghost*?
2. In the Prologue, the author describes what it might have been like during the last moments of La Salle's life, and also introduces many themes and characters that carry through to the modern day story. What are some of those themes?
3. Many of the characters in the book are loosely based on real people and real events in the La Salle saga. Can you name the fictional characters from the story that correspond to the following historic antecedents?

HENRI JOUTEL—La Salle's loyal assistant and chronicler of his life.

ABBE CAVELIER—La Salle's brother, who always looked after himself first and who profited from the loss of his brother.

THE KARANKAWA INDIANS—at war with the French from the time two canoes were stolen from them after a misunderstanding.

CAPTAIN TANEGUY BEAUJEU—La Salle's co-leader on the voyage and a frequent adversary.

PIERRE TESSIER—the incompetent naval officer who was drunk at the most inopportune times. Took part in La Salle's murder.

PIERRE DUHAUT—a merchant in La Salle's group whose bitterness at the mission's failures led him to kill La Salle.

THE PIRATE HIEMS—a man without a country who hired on with La Salle in Haiti (Petit Goave). Also one of La Salle's assassins and perhaps the worst of them.

L' ARCHEVEQUE—The youngest member of the expedition and a witness to La Salle's murder.

NIKA—La Salle's loyal Shawnee scout and hunter. Skilled in backwoods survival. Killed by La Salle's assassins.

THE FRENCH CROWN—which wanted La Salle to challenge Spain and England in the new world and also establish a base for raiding the rich Spanish silver mines in New Spain.

4. The character of Julien Dufay corresponds closely to that of La Salle. In what ways are they similar and different?
5. There is a parallel story told in the epigraphs by way of Father Poisson, or *Pere Poisson*. How does the fictional journal of the Franciscan cleric add context to the story?



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- 6.** The book describes the *La Belle* excavation in some detail. The primary sources the author used are: *The La Salle Expedition to Texas—The Journals of Henri Joutel, 1684–1687* (published by the Texas State Historical Society), *From a Watery Grave* (by James Bruseth and Toni Turner), *The Wreck of La Belle, the Ruin of La Salle* (by Robert Weddle), and first hand descriptions of the project from those who worked on it, Two details gleaned from these books are that the 2000 livres of gold (the Louis d'Ors) that were on the ships's manifest were never discovered, nor was the fourth bronze cannon ever discovered. What do you think might have happened to these lost treasures?
- 7.** In the book, archeology seems to be an overarching metaphor. Besides the French ship and the French settlement, what else is Charlie Sweetwater attempting to discover?
- 8.** What are the major themes of the story? Does the idea of the writers collaborating tell you anything about the way Charlie works through collaboration?
- 9.** In the final analysis is Mr. Sutton a sympathetic character or not?
- 10.**How much does this story depend upon the sense of place? Could it happen anywhere but the Texas Coast?
- 11.**Is Charlie Sweetwater a flawed hero? Why does he constantly find himself in trouble? What drives him?
- 12.**Are O.B. Hadnott and Miguel Cantu Negron two sides of the same coin?