

Book Group Questions on *When Water Was Everywhere*

1. What features of the landscape stand out for you after reading *When Water Was Everywhere*? If you are familiar with the Los Angeles/Long Beach area, what features from the 1840s surprised you? What features have changed?
2. What locations in the novel did you recognize? How do those locations look today?
3. How would you describe Don Rodrigo Tilman's character? Was he a sympathetic character to you? Why? Why not?
4. In thinking about how Tilman managed the store and the rancho, what actions do you agree or disagree with? What about the relationships he had with the people in each setting?
5. Did you find Henry Scott's character and actions agreeable? Troublesome? Understandable? Difficult to understand?
6. What facets of Henry Scott's character caused him difficulty? What facets helped him succeed?
7. What obstacles did Big Headed Girl face as she grew to womanhood? As you read about her, did some aspects of Tongva life emerge that you didn't know before reading the novel? What are they?
8. Psychologists today would tell us that the experiences that Henry Scott, Padre Jose and Big Headed Girl faced in their early lives would best be described by the word trauma. How did trauma shape each of these character's lives?
9. Big Headed Girl continued to experience trauma throughout her life. How do you think an ordinary person in today's world would cope?
10. What events of Padre Jose's early life may have caused him to abandon his faith? Did you think his actions toward the Indians in his care were appropriate? Would you have preferred him to act differently? How/how not?

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- 11.** How would you describe Padre Jose's encounter with the saint? In what ways did the encounter change his life? Have you or anyone you know had a transformative experience in life? Did it create lasting change?
- 12.** Henry Scott and Big Headed Girl make important decisions at the end of the novel. Why do you think each makes their decisions? How do their decisions affect your understanding of these characters?
- 13.** Why does water occupy a prominent place in the novel? Did the novel inspire you to find out more about water in Southern California or water in your area? About Native Americans in Southern California or Native Americans where you live?
- 14.** Of all the things you read in the story, what stands out for you?