

Book Club Topics for *Mortal Weather*

From the author KP McCarthy

Here are some conversation starters, in no particular order. I'm including a partial response to the first one in hopes of adding interest, but other responses from me would be inappropriate and provide too many spoilers. The point is, what do *you* think of the story? How does it align with your experiences and hopes for the future?

1. Why did Stanhope Ellis start smoking a pipe?

Several reasons, but the main one is that pipe smoke reminds Stan of his father. For him and his sisters, the aroma of Sir Walter Raleigh tobacco meant safety: their father, Justin Ellis, had been there recently to shovel the walk, fix the car, or otherwise make things right. In Stan's later football analogy, he saw Justin as a strong safety—not flashy but reliably stopping danger from advancing up the field. Pipe smoke also suggests work-as-play, as Justin was adept at jokey work talk when he was wearing his overalls, or *monkey suit*. Stanhope believes in work-as-play and wants those around him to be safe—especially when it seems he might be endangering others. The aroma adds an extra dimension throughout the story. Gaya loves it because it reminds her of Indian sandalwood incense. What aromas conjure special memories for you?

2. How did Stanhope's parents differ in their story-reading styles? Which do you prefer and why? Do you ever read to children? What is your method?
3. Who was looking forward to acquiring Dennis's guns? What happened to the guns and why?
4. What killed Jake Crosley?
5. Who is the "giraffe of a woman" that Stanhope likes? What does he give her and why?
6. What recurring dream did Stanhope and Pigeon share?
7. What happened when Shiva could not see?
8. What did Anshu say that lunch-bucket people love?
9. Who named everything at Navoti Books and Flowers? What always begins with names, according to Stanhope?

10. What special kind of leash did Connie use with her dog?
11. What everyday aspect of our culture does Connie try to shield herself from? Do you approve? Have you considered doing something similar?
12. According to Doctor B, are there exceptions eternally? Do you agree? Why or why not?
13. Why are the Shelvadors called the Shelvadors?
14. What is Stan's Immaculate Rebound? Why would Pidge love the name?
15. What did Trudy the collie do when Justin Ellis had a forestry accident?
16. Which superhero does Bix portray while washing windows? Why?
17. Why was General Pershing called Black Jack?
18. Who can conquer time and death? Why?