The Shining Mountains
A Novel

ALIX CHRISTIE

1. Catherine has to be convinced to marry Angus. Why do you think her Nez Perce uncle and her mother were in favor of the match? Are there parallels in other historical periods?

2. The first part of the novel is told in Catherine's and Angus's alternating points of view. What do they each see in the other that keeps them together despite such a grueling life and so many long periods apart?

3. Storytelling, both oral and written, is a big part of Native and Scottish cultures. Which traditional tales within the novel did you find most compelling? Why?

4. In the novel, Angus is highly critical of the way Governor Stevens seizes control of the vast territory west of the Rocky Mountains. Is his criticism justified?

5. What surprised you most about the story? Did you previously know the specific steps the US government took to dispossess the Native tribes?

6. What was the role of the discovery of gold in American westward expansion?

7. The Hudson's Bay Company was exploitative, depleting natural resources of fur and game and making some tribes dependent on trade. When, if ever, does Angus recognize his own role in the destruction of the Native way of life?

8. Near the end of the novel, Duncan attacks his father for participating in this "advance guard" of colonization. Did you sympathize with his position?

9. Red Horn becomes addicted to alcohol and is rescued by Duncan. What is the origin of the despair that leads him to drink?

10. Duncan and his mixed-race siblings have to choose between living in the white world and living on the reservation. Why does he decide to marry a Native woman and remain among the Salish?

11. Each of the Nez Perce chiefs leading the tribe's flight from the US Army in 1877 has a different idea about how to resist. Ultimately, were any of the different options likely to succeed?

12. Humor, courage, and resilience are attributes of many of the characters, both Native and Scottish. Who was your favorite character, and why?