

LOST CANYON

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Reading Group Guide

1. *Lost Canyon* opens with two very different epigraphs. What do they mean? How do they relate to each other—or not? What do they suggest about the book?
2. What compels Gwen, Oscar, Todd and Tracy to go on their trip to the Sierra? Are they driven by the same reasons? Different ones? What are they?
3. The first part of the book contains descriptions of three different areas of Los Angeles. How are these neighborhoods different? Collectively, what kind of picture do they paint of the city?
4. When do you first get the sense that the trip may be more complicated than the group originally expects? When do you know that something may go wrong?
5. When the group stops at the Franklin Cash Store, they have very different reactions. What is the significance of their time at the store? What do they learn? How do the events in the store foreshadow what happens later in the story?
6. Why do Gwen, Oscar, and Todd go along with Tracy's suggestions? Do you consider Tracy brave or reckless?
7. *Lost Canyon* includes many descriptions of nature and the mountains. Is nature enticing in the novel? Compelling? Frightening? How do the descriptions of nature contribute to the story?
8. Do you think of José as a perpetrator or a victim? Why?
9. Do you think that the growth of marijuana on public lands is a problem? Why or why not? If marijuana were legalized, what effect would it have on the growing of marijuana fields—and on the drug trade overall?
10. What does A.J. find so irritating about the hikers? Why? Do you think his attitudes have developed in spite of the increasingly diverse population of California—or because of it?
11. Which character do you identify with the most? Why?
12. How have the characters' different backgrounds shaped how they respond to things—whether it's the cash store in Franklin, or the solitude of the wild, or their perceptions of José and A.J.?

13. How would you describe the dynamics between the four main characters? How do these dynamics change throughout the book?
14. What did each character discover about him or herself through the course of the story? How did each of them change? Were you surprised by their evolutions?
15. Late in the novel, Todd is described as feeling “better in his body than he ever did at home.” What does this mean? Why does he feel better, when he is literally running for his life? What does this suggest about his life in the city?
16. In some ways, Gwen may be the character who is changed the most by the events of the story. How would you describe what happened to her, and where she is now? Why do you think these changes occurred?
17. The main characters have to make choices that involve participating in violence. What do you think of their decisions? Does violence change them? Are there situations in which violence is justifiable?
18. What do you think will happen with each of the characters after the end of the novel?