

The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper

By Phaedra Patrick

Questions for Discussion

1. Would you call **The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper** an adventure tale? A romance? A mystery?

Arthur, at 69 years old, has led a pretty sheltered life. Do you think he is typical of many in his generation?

2. When someone rings his doorbell, Arthur often pretends not to be at home. 'He screwed his eyes shut and pretended he was a statue in the garden of a stately home.' (Chapter One). Why do you think he does this? Is it something you might do?

3. If you were in Arthur's situation, bereaved after a long marriage, would you also devise strategies and routines to get you through the day?

4. Arthur's daughter, Lucy, worries about him. 'Lucy was more thoughtful. She sent thank-you cards and never, ever forgot a birthday.' (Chapter One). Do you think that girls are expected to be more caring and thoughtful than boys? Is this a natural thing, or something that is passed on?

5. Arthur is a very decent man. Why has he grown estranged from his own children?

6. Bernadette looks after her 'lost causes' with home-cooked food? Why do you think she does this? Do you ever use food as a way of looking after yourself, or others?

7. What do you think teenager, Nathan Patterson, thinks of Arthur when his mother, Bernadette, strikes up a friendship with the pensioner and Arthur tags along on their trip to look at universities? Can inter-generational friendships work?

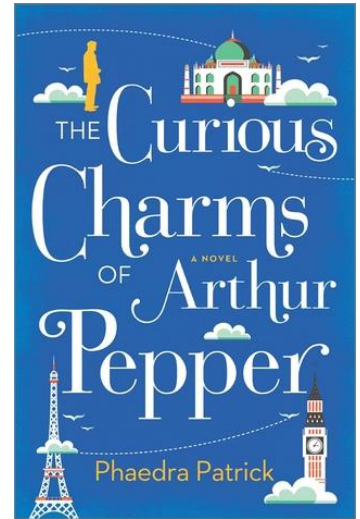
8. Arthur finds himself being entertained in the home of tiger-obsessed Lord and Lady Graystock. How does the Graystocks' life contrast with Arthur and Miriam's? Are there any similarities?

9. Arthur comes out of his comfort zone by travelling to London, Paris and India. When you have travelled to other countries, do you feel excited, or more apprehensive, about your travels? Were the places you travelled to as you expected, or were they very different?

10. Arthur encounters many people on his travels including tiger-crazy Lord Graystock, young homeless man Mike, Sylvie the French wedding boutique owner, Bernadette the busybody neighbor, caring daughter Lucy, illegal immigrant Sebastian, novelist Francois de Chauffant, and Indian doctor Mr. Mehra. Which character did you feel most emotionally connected to, and why?

11. Young homeless man, Mike, tells Arthur, 'Those charms might bring you luck.' What is your own lucky charm, and what luck has it brought you?

12. Which is your favorite story behind the charms – heart, paint palette, ring, book, tiger, elephant, thimble and flower – and why?



13. Arthur learns more about technology through his conversation with Nathan (eg Nathan uses Facebook to find Sonny Yardley). Would Arthur have been able to trace each of the charms on Miriam's bracelet without technology? Do you tend to shun or embrace technology?

14. The book tackles real life situations, but also asks the reader to accept life's random circumstances. Have any strange coincidences happened to you?

15. Do you think most married couples keep secrets about their pasts from each other?

16. What would you say is, ultimately, the most important thing that Arthur discovers about Miriam? About himself? About their life together?