

The Gourmet by Muriel Barbery

1. How far do you think *The Gourmet* is a book of the senses?
2. Muriel Barbery's writing evokes food very vividly. Which was your favourite description and why?
3. Pierre Arthens has ruthlessly pursued ambition and personal enjoyment at the expense of everyone else in his life. What do you think drove him to do this? Do you think it is a trait shared by many people who achieve this level of success?
4. Is there anything surprising about Arthen's personality? Do you find him at all likeable? Why does he seem to have a special affinity with animals?
5. There are many memories of childhood in the book. Which would you say best captures how children experience the world?
6. How significant is the theme of self-deception in the story?
7. What does the book tell us about the difference between the way individuals present themselves to the world and how they feel inside?
8. How do the many voices who speak in the novel contribute to our understanding of Arthens? Do you feel this is an effective way of telling the story?
9. What did you think of the ending? What does Arthens derive from finally remembering his long-sought-after flavour?
10. Ultimately is this book really about the significance of food?