

# ***The Valley of the Blue Moon***

by C.K. Bougae

## **BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE**

A Current Words Publishing Reading Group Resource

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## **About the Book**

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Every life begins with a story — one we inherit, and one we must eventually choose for ourselves.

At the center of *The Valley of the Blue Moon* is Leo Cavalieri, a young knight who seems to have everything: status, wealth, education, privilege. Yet underneath it all, he feels strangely disconnected from his own life. When war engulfs the Isle of Arryn, Leo is thrust into violence, imprisonment, and loss. He emerges from these experiences a changed man.

What follows is an adventure of mentors, magic, and a legendary treasure. But it becomes something larger: a search for meaning, purpose, and self-understanding.

Though set in a richly imagined world of kingdoms and ancient mysteries, the novel explores questions not dissimilar to those we all ask ourselves at different points in our lives:

- How do we discover our purpose?
- Can suffering become a catalyst for growth?
- What does it mean to live an authentic life?
- How do we heal from trauma?

This guide is designed to support discussion among book clubs, libraries, classrooms, and community reading groups. Its purpose isn't to test comprehension, but to spark conversation about the novel's characters, themes, and ideas.

## About the Author

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C.K. Bougae is the author of *The Valley of the Blue Moon*, an epic fantasy written to inspire and enchant readers of all ages. The first book in her Mysteries of Life Series, it explores love, self-discovery, and the courage required to pursue one's destiny.

A former educator who has taught at New York University, Montclair State University, and Florida State University, Bougae believes stories have the power not only to entertain but to transform. Her work has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Reuters*, *Hotel News*, *WalletHub*, and *Globo TV Brazil*.

C.K. Bougae is available for book club discussions, reader events, and virtual appearances via Zoom. Popular discussion topics include the Hero's Journey in modern fiction, building meaningful fictional worlds, and the relationship between storytelling and personal growth.

## Using This Guide

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The richest discussions of *The Valley of the Blue Moon* tend to move beyond plot. While the novel contains adventure, conflict, and magic, its deepest questions concern identity, healing, purpose, and transformation.

Use the sections below in any order (by theme, by character, or by question). There are no correct answers, only good conversation.

## Themes for Discussion

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### The Search for Purpose

Leo appears successful by every conventional measure. He is respected, educated, wealthy, and admired. Yet he feels disconnected from his own life. The novel suggests that purpose can't be inherited or assigned. Rather, it must be discovered through experience and choice.

- Why does Leo feel dissatisfied despite his advantages?
- Is purpose something people discover, or something they create?
- How does Leo's definition of success change over the course of the story?

### **Duty Versus Destiny**

For most of his life, Leo follows a path chosen for him; he becomes a knight out of obligation and fights because duty demands it. The novel repeatedly asks whether living up to expectation is enough.

- What responsibilities does Leo inherit, and when does he start to question them?
- Can duty and personal fulfillment coexist?
- What does Leo sacrifice in choosing his own path?

### **War, Trauma, and Healing**

The novel depicts war not as glory but as disruption and loss. Leo's imprisonment becomes the defining wound of his life, but the story is ultimately more interested in healing than in trauma itself.

- How does captivity change Leo?
- What emotional wounds remain after his physical freedom returns?
- Can painful experience become a source of wisdom?

### **Self-Discovery and Transformation**

Leo's journey is physical and internal at once. New places and people force him to confront his fears, assumptions, and regrets. The novel suggests transformation often begins when certainty ends.

- Which moments mark real turning points in Leo's growth?
- What beliefs must he abandon along the way?
- Is his transformation gradual, or does it happen all at once?

### **Mentors, Guides, and Wisdom**

Few people complete an important journey alone. Leo's guides don't simply hand him answers; they help him find his own.

- What role does Prospero play in Leo's development?
- Why are mentors so often central to stories of transformation?
- Could Leo have completed his journey without one?

### **Love, Compassion, and Connection**

Despite its scale, many of the novel's most meaningful moments are quiet ones, built on relationships. The story suggests that wisdom without compassion remains incomplete.

- Which relationship influences Leo most, and why?
- How does compassion change him?
- What role does forgiveness play in the story?

## The Meaning of the Treasure

The treasure drives Leo's quest, but the novel invites readers to read it literally, symbolically, or both. Many readers conclude that what Leo gains matters more than what he finds.

- What does the treasure symbolize, and does its meaning shift as the story unfolds?
- Was Leo searching for the wrong thing at first?
- What is the novel ultimately suggesting about fulfillment?

## Character Guide

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### Leo Cavallieri

Leo begins the novel as a man who appears to have everything: privilege, respect, education. Yet he feels disconnected from his own life. War and captivity strip away the assumptions that have guided him, and Leo's greatest battle turns out to be the one fought within himself. Over the course of the story, readers experience his emotional evolution from anger to understanding, fear to courage, self-concern to compassion.

- What creates Leo's early unhappiness despite his advantages?
- Which experience contributes most to his transformation?
- Is he searching for answers, purpose, or something deeper?

### Prospero

One of the novel's most significant guides, Prospero offers wisdom rather than easy solutions. He encourages Leo to confront his problems instead of solving them for him.

- What does Prospero teach Leo directly, and what does Leo learn on his own?
- Could Leo have completed the journey without Prospero?

### Sophie

Sophie brings connection, hope, and vulnerability into Leo's journey, reminding readers that relationships often shape transformation as much as quests or battles do.

- What does Sophie represent in Leo's life, and how does she challenge him?
- What role does love play in his growth?

### Lady

Leo's loyal animal companion offers comfort during uncertainty, reinforcing one of the novel's quieter themes: meaningful connection often arrives in unexpected forms.

- What does Lady represent beyond companionship?
- Why do readers often form strong attachments to animal characters in fiction?

### Marcus

Leo's rivalry with his brother predates the novel's main events, and their conflict reflects deeper questions of approval, identity, and jealousy. Marcus often mirrors traits in Leo that Leo struggles to recognize in himself.

- Are Marcus's criticisms of Leo ever justified?
- What does their relationship reveal about Leo?

### **Lady Olivia**

Unlike characters driven by power or ambition, Olivia is a steady source of compassion and resilience. She often sees truths about her family that others avoid.

- How does Olivia influence Leo, and what does her perspective reveal about him?

### **Burgess and Addie**

These two provide warmth, loyalty, and humanity throughout the story, reminding readers that ordinary relationships matter as much as heroic ones.

- What values do Burgess and Addie represent, and how do they support Leo when he needs it most?

### **King Augustin**

Thrust into leadership by his father's death and the outbreak of war, Augustin faces the same fear and uncertainty as Leo, his path remains tied to governance rather than personal exploration.

- What similarities and differences exist between Leo's and Augustin's journeys?

## **Discussion Questions**

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The following questions are meant to spark conversation, not consensus. The novel supports more than one interpretation, and the differences of opinion between readers are often where the best discussions begin.

### **Story & Character**

- What were your first impressions of Leo, and how did they change?
- Which event most shaped his transformation?
- Which supporting character did you find most memorable, and why?
- How does Lady Olivia shape Leo's understanding of his own family?
- What role does Marcus play in Leo's journey toward self-awareness?
- Which relationship in the novel felt most meaningful to you?

### **Theme & Meaning**

- Does suffering create wisdom, or merely suffering?
- Could Leo have discovered his purpose without going to war?
- What does the novel suggest about the relationship between happiness and purpose?
- Is courage the absence of fear, or the ability to act despite it?
- Can people truly change, or do they simply become more fully themselves?
- What responsibilities come with self-discovery?

## Symbolism & World

- What does the Blue Moon symbolize to you?
- Is the treasure best understood as literal, symbolic, or both?
- How does the landscape of the Isle of Arryn reflect Leo's inner journey?
- What role does magic play in the story (literal, metaphorical, or both)?

## Living the 4 lessons

As you traveled with Leo on his journey through the Four Lessons, how did you see the lessons in your own life?

- How do you use reflection in your life? How would you answer the question, "Who am I?"
- How do you view your relationships differently after planting the Garden of Gratitude with Leo? Who are your leaf, branch, and root friends?
- Following the Path of Self-Discovery is a lifelong, never-ending quest. What is your purpose? What are you here to do? How do you see your life differently after reading *The Valley of the Blue Moon*?
- Climbing the Summit of Serenity is about cultivating inner peace. What is your daily spiritual practice? When you read the karmic connections among Leo's soul family, who is your Jasper, Sophie, Lucia, or Marcus? Who needs to be forgiven? Who do you love? If needed, might you improve those relationships?
- If you had the opportunity to meet your younger self, what would you say to that 10-year-old little girl or boy?

## Personal Reflection

- Have you ever experienced a period of transformation similar to Leo's?
- What "treasure" do you think people search for in their own lives?
- Who have been the mentors in your own life?
- Has your definition of success changed over time?
- What idea from the novel stayed with you after you finished it?
- What conversation do you hope this book inspires in your group?

## Behind the Book

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### Writing Spiritual Fantasy

Fantasy has long given writers a way to explore questions that are hard to examine directly. *The Valley of the Blue Moon* uses its world of kingdoms, mentors, and magic not as escapism, but as a framework for exploring purpose, healing, identity, and wisdom—ideas that operate on more than one level at once.

## The World of the Isle of Arryn

The novel's setting does more than provide a backdrop for adventure; its geography mirrors Leo's emotional journey. The rugged north evokes conflict and hardship; the fertile south evokes possibility and renewal.

- How does the landscape reflect what Leo is going through internally?
- Could this story have worked in a different setting?

## Why Leo's Journey Matters

Many readers meet Leo at a moment of quiet dissatisfaction: he has achieved what the world considers valuable, yet feels incomplete (an experience that is more common than uncommon). The novel suggests that purpose isn't waiting at the end of the road but that it emerges through the choices made while walking it.

## An Afternoon (or Evening) with C.K. Bougae

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Many book clubs, libraries, schools, and community reading groups enjoy inviting authors to join their discussions. C.K. Bougae is available for select virtual appearances, offering readers the opportunity to ask questions about *The Valley of the Blue Moon*, explore its themes and characters, and learn more about the writing process behind the novel.

To inquire about scheduling a virtual visit, please contact [david@currentwords.com](mailto:david@currentwords.com) or visit [currentwords.com](http://currentwords.com). Author appearances are subject to availability.

## Questions for the Author

The following questions may serve as a starting point for your conversation with the author.

### About the Novel

- What first inspired *The Valley of the Blue Moon*?
- Did the story begin with Leo, the treasure, or the world itself?
- Which scene came to you first, and which one was hardest to write?
- Which character surprised you most during the writing process?

### Character & Craft

- Why did you choose Leo as your protagonist?
- Which character do you relate to most personally?
- Why was it important to include mentors like Prospero?
- How do you balance entertainment with deeper themes?

### Themes & Meaning

- Did you set out to write a story about purpose and self-discovery?
- What does the treasure represent to you?
- What do you hope readers take away from Leo's journey?
- How did your background as an educator shape your storytelling?

## Looking Ahead

- What do you hope readers remember a year after finishing the novel?
- If readers took away only one lesson, what would you want it to be?
- What question do you most enjoy hearing from readers?
- What can readers expect from the Mysteries of Life Series moving forward?

## Tips for Discussion Leaders

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Book clubs approach fantasy differently. Some focus on plot and world-building, others on symbolism or spiritual themes. There's no single right way to discuss *The Valley of the Blue Moon*, but these suggestions may help:

- Ask participants to support their observations with examples from the text.
- Leave room for more than one interpretation of a symbol or theme.
- Consider opening with one of the Personal Reflection questions to set a thoughtful tone.
- Explore both the literal and symbolic layers of the story.
- Aim for exploration, not agreement; the best discussions raise new questions rather than settle on final answers.

Many groups find that conversation naturally drifts from adventure toward bigger questions of identity, healing, and purpose. Don't be afraid to follow it there.

## Final Reflection

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Many fantasy novels end when the treasure is found or the hero comes home. *The Valley of the Blue Moon* asks readers to consider a different possibility: that the most important discoveries aren't the treasures we uncover, but the people we become while searching for them.

As you close your discussion, consider returning to one simple question:

**What treasure, visible or invisible, are we each searching for, and how might we recognize it when we find it?**

## About the Publisher

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Based in Los Angeles, Current Words Publishing, LLC, is an independent publisher dedicated to helping writers bring meaningful stories into the world. In addition to publishing fiction, nonfiction, memoir, and poetry, CWP develops reader resources that encourage thoughtful engagement with literature. As publisher Dianne Pearce explains, "Books aren't just products to be consumed. They're conversations to be shared."

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