

A Far Different Path by Michael Stone
Reader's Guide

Discussion Questions for *A Far Different Path*

1. *WHAT DO YOU SEE* as the pros and cons of growing up at the turn of the century, as Lucile did? Would you have liked coming of age at that time?
2. *WHEN LUCILE LEAVES HOME* for the first time at age 22, she has spent her entire life within a five-mile radius of the Ball family farm. What factors do you think contributed to her yearning to leave Albion to “find an adventure of her own” when this was not the norm for most young women at that time? How is it different for a young woman now?
3. *THE TOWN OF MUNISING* was founded in 1896, the same year that Lucile was born. By the time she arrives, it is a booming and vibrant mill town. What are your impressions of the setting of this novel and what role did it play in Lucile’s experiences?
4. *HOWARD’S EXPERIENCES IN WWI* unfold in parallel to Lucile’s story, through the inclusion of his letters in the narrative. How do you think these alternating points of view contributed to the story? What was your experience following both of their journeys simultaneously?
5. *HOW DID YOU FEEL* about Lucile’s attraction to Thomas Fremont? Did it change how you regarded Lucile or her relationship with Howard?
6. *THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC FIRST* surfaced in the spring of 1918, primarily in military camps, but was barely even noticed in the U.S., due to the war effort; when it returned that fall, its onset was rapid and deadly. What challenges did government officials face to convince citizens that the flu was suddenly a threat to be feared and contained?
7. *THE STRAIN OF INFLUENZA* seen during the 1918 epidemic was especially virulent, killing healthy adults at an exceptional rate. Epidemiologists, who study such diseases, remain vigilant for its return, certain it would be even more deadly now. After reading about the suffering and fear caused by this virus, do you think about influenza any differently?
8. *HOW DID YOU FEEL* when Lucile and Howard were reunited? How do you think each of them were changed by their time apart?

9. *HAVING SURVIVED BOTH WAR* and disease, did you assume – as Lucile certainly did – that she might be spared any further threats of loss in her life? What was your reaction to Howard’s death in the boating accident?
10. *HOW DID LUCILE’S EXPERIENCES* in Munising help her to cope with the loss of her beloved Howard and move forward with her life? How might her life story have turned out differently if she hadn’t had those experiences to draw on?
11. *THE THEME OF BEING* “engulfed” or “swallowed” is a common one in *A Far Different Path*. What images and events do you recall in the book that represent this theme?
12. *BY HER OWN ACCOUNT*, Lucile traveled “a far different path” in life than she ever could have imagined as a young woman. In the end she appears to have found happiness and peace, despite tremendous heartache and loss. Does this message of strength, courage, and perseverance hold any meaning for you personally? What about for our society or world as a whole?