

Book Club Discussion Questions

A Man of Honor, or Horatio's Confessions

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1. In *A Man of Honor*, Horatio sees personal integrity as a matter of life versus death, as many people believed in medieval and renaissance Europe. Does this belief exist today? Why or why not?
2. What observations does this novel make about persistence, how it can be good or bad in a person's life or society? How do these ideas relate to our present day? To our future?
3. What motivates Horatio to follow his perilous quest, other than his fear of failing his promise to Hamlet? Do his motivations change?
4. If you could spend a day in any of the places described in this novel, where would it be, and why?
5. How does Margrete persevere while she lives at Castle Krogen? To what degree does she have to reinvent herself to survive beyond that place? What characteristics does she have that helps or hinders her?
6. Margrete tells Horatio that Hamlet did not care for the well being of other people. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
7. Friar Poul Helgesen tells Horatio, "Truth telling is like standing naked in the commons square. Once you present yourself bare and unabashed, it is as easy as lying." Do you agree or disagree with this general idea? Why or why not?
8. Although the main characters in *A Man of Honor* are fictitious, the places and many minor characters existed in history. Why does the author mix fact and fiction?
9. What is interesting about the way this story is told? How are the episodes of the novel arranged and connected? What are the turning points in the action after which everything is different? Did these surprise you, or did you anticipate them?
10. What is the novel's theme? What central message or idea links all the other components of the novel together?
11. In what ways are Margrete and other women at Krogen limited by social expectations? In what ways do they succeed despite those limitations? What are their choices? What are their risks?

12. How would you describe Lanier's personal journey? Horatio's personal journey? Margrete's personal journey? What are the similarities and differences between their struggles? Who do you think dealt best with their challenges and why?

13. In *A Man of Honor*, the Christian religion is prevalent but beneath the surface pagan beliefs and practices also exist. Is it possible for religion and other beliefs to co-exist? Why or why not?

14. The canon of Lund has a choice between helping people who need his assistance versus resisting Cristiern's dangerous ambition. What would you have done if you were in the canon's "shoes"?

15. What motivates Margrete's need to withdraw? What does she hope to achieve? If she has options, what are they for the time period and why? What do you think about her decisions?

16. "Humanitas" was an early reformation-era concept that included man's free will as a part of God's plan. To what extent does Horatio's choices shape his future? To what degree do we have free will in our lives?

17. What do legends and storytelling have to do with this story? If legends and storytelling are important for us today, where do you see evidence of this? Why are they important, or not?

18. What are some of Lanier's defining qualities? Is he a sympathetic character? Why or why not?

19. Horatio has two dreams, one about Hamlet and dark water, and the other about a skull. How did Horatio interpret these dreams? How do you interpret their meaning, now that you have read *A Man of Honor*?

20. What is "a strategic lie," according to Horatio? What does Margrete think about "strategic lies"? Who do you think is right? Is a "strategic lie" ever justified?

21. Can we relate Horatio's challenges to those of our own time? What can we learn, or what should we consider, in order to be people of honor?

(Questions issued by author)