

## *Dream Helper*

### **Questions and Topics for Discussion**

1. Discuss your feelings about the Chumash people. What was their life like before the coming of the Spaniards? Why did they accept the newcomers without a fight? What motivated them to join the missions? What was life like for the Chumash who stayed in their villages or lived in the pueblo?
2. Discuss the Spaniards and Mexicans who came to Santa Barbara. What motivated them to move to an outpost far from their homes? What do you think their lives were like before coming to Santa Barbara? How did they feel about the Chumash? What do you think life was like for this small band of men with their wives and children?
3. What are your feelings about the Franciscan priests? Were they an overzealous group? A group of misfits? Why did they treat the neophytes in their charge the way they did? How was their concept of religion in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries different than the concept today? Do you think the author treated them fairly?
4. The Chumash people saw spirits all around them; in the rocks and plants and animals. How did that differ from the Spaniards? The Chumash believed they had Dream Helpers that guided their lives; what guided the lives of the priests and soldiers? Discuss the differences and similarities in the two world views.
5. Discuss the plot hatched by Demetrio de Alba and Padre Fermin Ortiz. Each had different motives to begin with; what do you think they were? How did you feel about each of these characters?
6. Discuss Josefa's role in the story. Is she an important character or an insignificant one? Justify your opinion with specific instances from the story.
7. Discuss the ending of the story. What feelings did you have at the end? What motivated Cayatu's decision? What events throughout the story led to her decision? Was it a satisfying decision?
8. The author used a lot of symbolism throughout the story. Discuss some of the symbols and their use in advancing the story. What did the seed basket represent? The hawks? The mouse early in the story? What does the Dream Helper symbolize?
9. From a historical perspective, how does the story differ from what you may previously have learned about California mission history? Discuss any differences you can think of.