

Discussion Questions

Some Danger Involved by Will Thomas



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1. To what does the title refer? Who is narrating the chapters? Look at the language in the opening paragraphs. What does it tell you about the narrator? What are some of the specifics about the narrator's life up to his employment with Barker? Is he a reliable narrator? If so, why?
2. How does *Some Danger Involved* hook you as a reader? Share your response to the book's language, pace, and details, and to its characters. When does the story take place? Share some examples of how Will Thomas uses language and other signposts—such as people, items, and customs—to reveal the era.
3. In chapter 2, what does Llewelyn mean when he says that Barker is “playing Virgil to my Dante”? Do his words foreshadow anything? If so, what? Recount what happens to Llewelyn in chapter 2. What do we learn about Barker? What does Barker see in Llewelyn?
4. Looking at chapter 3, read the titles of some of the books Llewelyn finds in his room at Barker's house. Why were these titles chosen in particular? What do they have to do with the two men's work, or their lives? Do the titles of the books provide any clues to the story that will come?
5. Share our opinions about Barker. Describe him physically. In terms of his habits, what kind of person is he? Does he remind you of any other literary private investigator? If so, who, and why? What do we really know about Barker?
6. At the end of chapter 6, what does Llewelyn tell us that “barker” means in prison argot? Does this definition fit with the character? Discuss the other character names. How does the author supply information about the characters through the names he chooses for them?
7. Given the story's historical setting, how does author Will Thomas incorporate England's class system? Consider Barker's staff. Why has the author chosen the name Jacob Maccabee for his butler? Why, or why not, is a Jewish butler appropriate for this story?
8. How does the author use the historic struggles of the Jewish people here? What is he telling us? What is the role of anti-Semitism in the book? How effective is it for this story?

9. In chapter 13, look at the interview Barker conducts with Reverend Painsley. Share your reaction to what Painsley is saying about the Jews.
10. Why do you believe Llewelyn was shot at in chapter 14? At that point, did you have any clue as to why he would be a target? Did you realize that this was a ruse to throw off the investigation?
11. Share your reactions to Professor Rushford's speech on eugenics. Do you think his ideas still prevail in some quarters? Why? What is the purpose of holding and espousing such an opinion? Discuss whether or not the basis of eugenics is a natural phenomenon (like genetics) or a fabricated one, and why.
12. Looking at chapter 17, observe how Llewelyn describes Sebastian Nightwine when he first sees him. Describe Nightwine. What is his residence like? What is his role in the story?
13. How did you react on discovering who the killer is? How does Will Thomas succeed in surprising the reader? Why does the killer crucify the young scholar?
14. Do you think there is much more to learn about Barker and Llewelyn? Discuss how Will Thomas leaves room for a sequel, and what you might like to see this pair doing next.