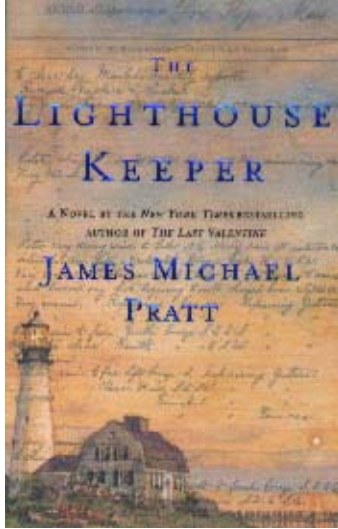


## Reader's Group Guide

to

### *The Lighthouse Keeper*



James Michael Pratt

*The Lighthouse Keeper* takes the reader on a journey through the eyes of an 80 year old Peter O'Banyon. Not unlike Pratt's other two "go-back-in-time" novels set in the present day and sweeping back to the time of World War Two, the main character has a set of issues, questions, and challenges that he reviews one final time.

A parallel love story sets the stage for the reader and helps Peter examine the value of his life, now drawing to a close. Who was William Robert O'Banyon? What role does he play? Could the story be told without him? Why? Why not?

1. Who is his daughter and what role does she play?
2. Why is her role central to the telling of the story?
3. There are two parallel love stories. Who are the main characters in each and what are their commonalities? Differences?
4. What was life like for Irish immigrants in the turn-of-the-century?
5. Pratt uses real history in all of his novels. He told of a plague that killed over 25 million people world wide. Unknown to the reader he used it from the inspiration given him by his immigrant Dutch grandmother, Connie Vorkink, who died, and then came back to life in the morgue. What year was the Spanish Influenza plague? Why did it kill so many? Did you know it killed more American servicemen than all of World War I?

6. Pratt used a death scene with words exchanged between Robert O'Banyon and son Billie. What was Billie's (William O'Banyon) goal in going to Ireland? What were the words exchanged between Robert and Billie? (FYI: They were identical words from a real life exchange between Pratt and his dying father Grant.)
7. Pratt used the World War Two history of his father. What American Armored Division was Peter assigned to? Where did it fight? Why do you suppose Pratt uses so much warfare history in this novel and others?
8. Joey Cipriano was based upon the composite of two good friends Pratt's father had in his military outfit. Pratt Sr.'s friend died as portrayed in the Joey character. What town in Italy? Notwithstanding Joey's fun-loving gambling, raucous behavior, what redeeming qualities did Joey display? Can war bring out positive morals in people as well as the bad? What are some of them?
9. Where was the lighthouse located? Why does it create the mood for the book?
10. Anna – what does she show us in character and personal qualities? What marital qualities does she cherish about her life with Peter?
11. Given the sometimes romanticized ideals of lighthouse keeping, what would have been the realities of living on a sparsely populated island? Would you have liked it? Why? Why not?
12. Why do some people seem to have more tragedy as Peter seemed to? What did he need to learn? Teach us? Or is it merely the whims of mortality that cause some to lose loved ones early, or more often than others?
13. Katherine was painting. What was it she was looking for as she attempted to complete the oil painting for her father Peter?
14. What theme did the painting become when it was finished for Katherine to see?
15. Hope in spite of tragedy seems to loom as a theme throughout the pages. What characters and where in the story does hope seem to be the strongest? Weakest?
16. Pratt creates a metaphor through a letter written by the deceased wife of Billie O'Banyon, Katie, for a greater Light Keeper. If you are comfortable discussing, please offer personal commentary on why he created that metaphor, why it is or isn't appropriate, and what it means to you.