**Questions to Consider about *The World of Pondside***

1. The novel has five point-of-view characters—Foster, Laverne, Dakota, Kitty, and Mary McIntyre. Whose perspective was the most interesting to you? Were there any other characters you wished you could have heard from?
2. Were there any characters you found it hard to sympathize with?

Which character's life situation struck you as the saddest?

Of all the characters, which one do you like best?

1. Do you identify with any of the characters in the novel? Which one(s)? Do any of them remind you of someone you know?
2. What do you think of Dakota’s decision to switch from pursuing a career in medicine to becoming a teacher? Is the switch an act of courage or of cowardice? Do you think he’ll become a teacher? Or will he change his mind and return to medicine? Which career path do you think he should choose?
3. If you were in Laverne’s place, would you have decided to seize “the opportunity of a lifetime”? What happens to Laverne in the end? Would you call her fate “a happy ending”?
4. The words “lost her baby” mean a lot of different things when it comes to Mary McIntyre. Were you surprised when you learned the actual cause of her grief?
5. What do you make of Erika? To what extent do changes in Erika depend on the perspective of the point-of-view character observing her?
6. What does the *World of Pondside* game do for the people who play it? Benefits of playing? Negative effects? Does it make a difference if a player is perceived as "old and with nothing else to do" or "young and with their life ahead of them"?
7. Which do you think is more important: imagination or memory? What part does each play in the *World of Pondside* game?
8. If somebody offered to make a World of Pondside portal for you, who/what/where would you want to include in it?
9. To what extent does “alternate reality” describe the experiences of various characters, both inside and outside the game?
10. Edith Cobb tells Mary McIntyre’s daughter that the nursing home is a death sentence. Laverne Slatchek says life is a death sentence. Who’s right?
11. What role, if any, does revenge play in this novel?
12. The ALS drug in the novel is fictional; in real life there is no cure for ALS and no generally effective drug or other treatment to slow its progression. In the novel, there is such a drug—one that can slow or even reverse the progression of ALS, although it only works for some people and is not approved by the FDA for treatment of ALS. Was Robert wrong to use the game as part of a smuggling operation to make the drug available to people (including himself) who could benefit from its use? Was he wrong to end Scott’s illicit use of the game (as a communication vehicle for smugglers, etc.)?
13. **Do you think someone pushed Robert Kallman into the pond? If so, who dunnit? Was it a murder, or not?**