

THE CHEF'S APPRENTICE

BY ELLE NEWMARK

1. In *The Chef's Apprentice*, no one seems to know exactly what is in the mysterious book that everyone wants, but each character is sure that it has the thing he or she wants or fears the most. What does this say about human nature?
2. The Renaissance was the dawn of humanism. When the chef takes Luciano into his confidence, he tells him to "Look in, not up." How does this reflect the movement toward humanism in the fifteenth century?
3. The chef needs an apprentice as well as a protégé for his secret legacy, but he also wishes for a son. How does this and Luciano's wish for a father complicate the situation? In the last chapter, what point is the author making about biological parenthood?
4. Why is this story set in Renaissance Venice? Would it be the same in Medieval England? If not, why not?
5. How does the author make Venice one of the characters?
6. The chef has many challenges. His wife, whom he loves, doesn't like Luciano, and Luciano, whom he loves, is a loose cannon. Also, he has seditious secrets to keep from powerful men. Which one of these complications do you think is the most difficult for him, and why?

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7. What is Luciano's fatal flaw?
8. How does young Luciano compare to old Luciano?
9. Throughout the book, the author uses food as metaphor. Considering what the chef wishes to teach Luciano, why is the soufflé the most significant recipe, and how does the lesson of the soufflé impact Luciano's behavior?
10. How do Francesca and Rosa reflect women's role in society at that time?
11. Does Marco get what he deserves, or is he, as Luciano observes, unduly punished? Does his fate make him sympathetic in the end?
12. In the last sentence, Luciano overhears something about a new theory and he says, "I turned around as if the chef had called my name." How does that ending work with theme of immortality?
13. Throughout the book, there are several references to astrology, the secretive age of Pisces and the revelatory Age of Aquarius. How does that relate to the discoveries made in the 20th century?
14. Is Francesca sympathetic as a victim of her times, or is she simply an opportunist?

