



## Discussion Questions

### The Messenger of Athens by Anna Zouroudi Daughters of Penelope Foundation Bookclub

1. "From the sea, the island of Thiminos showed exactly what it was: rock, one huge rock, so undercut by the salt water of the southern Aegean it seemed to float free, rising and falling in the swell" (page 30). How important do you think the setting is to the novel's plot? In your opinion, are small communities like Thiminos more caring places to live than cities?
2. "I expect you're surprised at my name: Hermes Messenger. My father's idea of humor. He was a classical scholar" (page 12). What clues does the author give to the identity of Hermes, the mysterious "Messenger of Athens"? What do you think is the significance of the references throughout the book to the myths of ancient Greece?
3. In what ways is the character of Aunt Sofia representative of the role and status of women on the island of Thiminos? Do you think her ending will be a happy one?
4. Men and women don't mix. Don't think the same way, don't want the same things" (page 209). To what extent do you think Lukas' view of the relationship between the sexes is mirrored in broader communities and cultures?
5. What do you think are Theo's most significant characteristics? Is his dissatisfaction with his life justified, or should he be grateful for what he has? To what extent is he a free man? And did you feel his punishment at the fat man's hands was appropriate?
6. "Let me tell you about my husband. My *man*. I put up with it for years, his running around with every whore who would drop their knickers for a wink and a smile. He wasn't fussy" (page 271). What differences between men's and women's attitudes to infidelity does the book show? Do you think those attitudes are shared in the wider world?

7. To what extent is *The Messenger of Athens* a love story? What do you make of the portrayals of love in the novel, especially the relationships between Irini and Andreas and Irini and Theo? Which has more value, love, or passion?
8. Seemingly the event that brings Hermes to Thiminos is Irini's death, but he has other tasks to accomplish while he is there. Thinking about his interactions with all the characters particularly Aunt Sofia and the Chief of Police what do you think is at the heart of Hermes' mission?
9. Had you anticipated who had murdered Irini, and were the identities of the murderers a shock? Did you find the women's violence inexcusable, or did it seem inevitable, given what you had been told of their lives?
10. Is *The Messenger of Athens* a crime novel? How do the fat man's "unorthodox" methods fit with your response?
11. *The Messenger of Athens* is the first in a series based on the Seven Deadly Sins. What sin is at the heart of the book? Do you think the Seven Deadly Sins have any contemporary relevance outside small, old-fashioned communities like Thiminos?