

Rattlesnake Bluff - DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The book is entitled Rattlesnake Bluff. Can you think of two reasons why that title is appropriate?
2. Was the death of the Garcia kids an accident, or murder? Explain.
3. What is the difference between an eastern massasauga rattlesnake and a timber rattlesnake? Are there populations of massasaugas elsewhere?
4. Discuss the pros and cons of threatened and endangered species laws that enable the USFW to temporarily stop work on a construction site. Are those laws warranted? Are they a good thing? Bad?
5. Worker Jules Ortega discovers the massasauga and kills it. Destroying an endangered species is a felony. Why isn't Jules prosecuted?
6. The novel's main protagonist is a white supremacist and a Nazi sympathizer. In what ways does his perspective lead to his ultimate demise?
7. Jules may be an undocumented worker. The Garcia kids were the children of a Mexican-born father and a local mother. And dairy farmer Joe Smiley is an immigrant. In what ways do their differing immigration backgrounds play out in the book?
8. Zoning Commissioner Henry Fields's whereabouts are unknown during a weekend when murders happen, making him a suspect for the crime. He claims he has a solid alibi for his disappearance but refuses to share it. Why? If you were in Henry's shoes, what would you do?
9. Sheriff Betsy Conrad's perspectives about eastern massasauga rattlesnakes evolve over time? Why?
10. In what ways does Minnesota's bluff country play a key role in the story?

