

MYSTERIOUS CALIFORNIA: FOUR AUTHORS
DISCUSSIONS QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS TO POSE AFTER READING
***THE ART OF DETECTION* by LAURIE R. KING**

In Laurie R. King's *The Art of Detection*, San Francisco homicide detective Kate Martinelli is drawn into the surreal world of Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts, when one is murdered and it appears that an unpublished Holmes manuscript may be at the root of the crime. The novel beautifully evokes San Francisco in the early 20th century and in the modern day, in all its unpredictable, colorful variety.

Character Names:

Kate Martinelli

Al Hawkin

Mr. Sigerson aka Sherlock Holmes

Martin Ledbetter, Holmes' tour guide

Bill Birdsong

Jack Raynor

Gregory Halston

Philip Gilbert, Sherlock Holmes collector, murder victim

Ian Nicholson

1. On page 237 (hardcover), Sherlock Holmes says, "Granted, everyone in California is from somewhere else, which means everyone in the state has had to reinvent themselves..." Do you think this is true?
2. Laurie King talks about San Francisco being a city built on layers. Does traveling to the past illuminate our view of the present?
3. Do you like reading details, such as, the one-way streets King says she has to get right or the detail about the man who washed the coins at the St. Francis Hotel? Was there any specific detail you especially enjoyed reading in "The Art of Detection?"
4. In the film, King says that the job of fiction is to say, "This is what a different human being looks like..." She goes on to list people from different cultures, faiths, and, gender identification. Do you think this is true? Do you like to read

books that introduce you to characters that you might not otherwise meet?

5. What do you suppose King is saying in the last scene in the book, which takes place in 2004 at San Francisco City Hall when, "Kate glanced back down the growing line of men and women waiting their turn. Their faces were young and old, dark and light, male and female; they wore bow ties and T-shirts, white silk and blue denim, velvet and battered leather, tiaras and hand-knit hats; they carried backpacks and flowers, folded newspapers and small jeweler's boxes, they had kids of all sizes or were little more than kids themselves. But all the people in the line, every one of them, wore just the same expression: stunned with joy, incredulous and expectant, and absolutely certain of what they were doing. And for an instant, Kate caught a glimpse of someone she knew, or thought she knew. Down where the hallway turned, a tall young man with close-cropped blond hair and eyes the color of lapis lazuli stood gazing down at his brown-skinned, green-eyed beloved."