

**MYSTERIOUS CALIFORNIA: FOUR AUTHORS**  
**DISCUSSIONS QUESTIONS**

**QUESTIONS TO POSE AFTER READING**  
***SHARPSHOOTER* by NADIA GORDON**

Nadia Gordon takes us into the heart of the food and wine culture of the wine country in *Sharpshooter*, the first of her Sunny McCoskey Napa Valley Mysteries. Sunny is a bright, creative culinary detective who uses her finely tuned sensory skills in investigations that delve into the tangled politics and colorful personalities of the wine industry.

Characters:

Sunny McCoskey, 32-year-old chef-owner of the Wildside Café

Rivka, sous chef

Monty Lenstrom

Wade Skord

Louisa and Al Beroni

Jack Beroni, murder victim

Steve Harvey, police officer

Claire Baker and Ben Baker, Hansen Ranch organic farmers

Charlie Rhodes, entomologist

Ernesto Campaglia, father of Alex & Gabe and winemaker at Beroni Vineyards, grandson of the founder of Cortona Winery (founded in 1881)

1. Nadia describes Sunny as strong-willed, intelligent and courageous. She says, "She won't flinch from difficult questions. She's intuitive and inquisitive." Do you think Gordon has succeeded in getting these qualities across?
2. Has Nadia Gordon's keen appreciation for light and color, as she describes in the film, and also in the details she includes in the book, made you notice and appreciate light and color more?
3. In the United States we drink less wine per capita than in many other countries, yet we enjoy seductive prose about vineyards and wine. For many years, the Napa Valley was the second most popular California tourist attraction, after Disneyland. Does wine and the production of wine have some hold on our imagination, even if we don't drink a lot of it?

4. Monty says on page 51 of "Sharpshooter," "The land is starting to talk and it has some very interesting things to say." Do you think land can talk?
5. Catelina Alvarez taught Sunny lessons that Sunny continues to use as wisdoms to guide her in life and cooking, such as "Never cook with wine you wouldn't drink," or "Never trust the color on the outside [of a peach], Sonya. A golden peach can be as hard as a stone or as grainy as porridge. The smell gives you a hint, but to really know, you have to slice one open and taste what is inside. Until then, you are only guessing." Sunny says Catelina was the "queen of due diligence." Why are Catelina's teachings so meaningful to Sunny?
6. Why is friendship such an important part of Sunny's world?
7. Gordon talks about the process of decision-making that transpired when the sharpshooter became a serious threat to the grapes in the wine country? She points out the conflict between the mono-culture (grapes) versus the smaller growers (organic farmers). Should the "bigger producer" have a more dominant voice in such decisions?