



## The Silence of Bonaventure Arrow

By Rita Leganski  
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### Introduction

Conceived in love and possibility, Bonaventure Arrow didn't make a peep when he was born, and the doctor nearly took him for dead. No one knows that Bonaventure's silence is filled with resonance—a miraculous gift of rarified hearing that encompasses the Universe of Every Single Sound. Growing up in the big house on Christopher Street in Bayou Cymbaline, Bonaventure can hear flowers grow, a thousand shades of blue, and the miniature tempests that rage inside raindrops. He can also hear the gentle voice of his father, William Arrow, shot dead before Bonaventure was born by a mysterious stranger known only as the Wanderer.

Bonaventure's remarkable gift of listening promises salvation to the souls who love him: his beautiful young mother, Dancy, haunted by the death of her husband; his Grand-m're Letice, plagued by grief and a long-buried guilt she locks away in a chapel; and his father, William, whose roaming spirit must

fix the wreckage of the past. With the help of Trinidad Prefontaine, a Creole housekeeper endowed with her own special gifts, Bonaventure will find the key to long-buried mysteries and soothe a chorus of family secrets clamoring to be healed.

### Questions for Discussion

1. As a fetus in his mother's womb, Bonaventure can hear her heartbeat, blood flow and breathing. He can also hear a bluesy trumpet and the shuffling of tarot cards. What might those things signify? In what ways is Bonaventure's rarified hearing a double-edged sword?
2. The fog rolling over Saint Anthony's Garden is yet another sound that comes to baby Bonaventure. Saint Anthony is popularly known as the saint of lost things. What have some of the characters lost? Bonaventure, too, was named for a saint. How does his name reflect his character and his destiny?
3. In addition to loss, Rita Leganski explores the theme of isolation. How are some of the characters isolated from the world and/or from each other?
4. How do Dancy, Letice, Eugenia Babbitt, and The Wanderer anesthetize themselves from emotional pain?
5. Herbal medicine is sometimes considered alternative "New Age" therapy, but in reality its use goes back thousands of years. What do the speckled stone and Trinidad's simples have in common? Did anyone in your family ever use a home remedy? If so, what was it and did it work? Do you use them?
6. Talk about the role of faith and religion in the novel. How do Letice and Trinidad express their spirituality? In what ways are they alike in their beliefs? In what ways are they different?
7. What role does social/economic class play in the story? How does class adversely affect the characters, most notably, Suville, Calypso, and even Letice?
8. Personalities contain different proclivities and emotions. In associating the characters in this story with common personality traits, Grandma Roman might represent jealousy. Which traits might other characters represent?
9. How does Gabe's love for Dancy compare to William's love for her? What does each man provide for Bonaventure?
10. What impact does setting—the time and the place—have on the story?
11. Compare and contrast the four women in Bonaventure's life: his mother, his two grandmothers, and Trinidad? What did the boy learn about life from each of them?
12. What drew you to read *The Silence of Bonaventure Arrow*? What did you take away from the novel?

### About the Author

Rita Leganski holds an MA in writing and publishing and a BA in literary studies and creative writing from DePaul University. She teaches a writing workshop at DePaul's School for New Learning and was a recipient of the Arthur Weinberg Memorial Prize for a work of historical fiction.