

The book cover features a close-up of a man's face wearing a tweed flat cap, set against a background of a dark, starry sky with a large, bright, icy planet or moon. The title 'ICE OUT' is written in large, white, serif font across the center. Below the title, a vintage car is shown on a snowy surface.

MARY
CASANOVA
AUTHOR OF FROZEN

ICE OUT



A BOOK DISCUSSION GUIDE

for *Ice-Out* by Mary Casanova



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Casanova is the author of thirty-five books, ranging from picture books such as *Wake Up, Island* and *One-Dog Canoe* to novels (*Frozen*, *The Klipfish Code*, and *When Eagles Fall*.) She has written several books for American Girl, including *Jess*, *Chrissa*, *Chrissa Stands Strong* (also an HBO movie); and *McKenna* and *Grace*, both of which inspired movies from Universal Pictures. Her books land on many state reading lists and have earned many awards, including the American Library Association “Notable Award,” Aesop Accolades from the American Folklore Society, Parent’s Choicer Gold Award, Booklist Editor’s Choice, two Minnesota Book Awards, and a National Outdoor Book Award “Honorable Mention.” When she’s not on the road speaking or traveling for research, she’s likely trail-riding with her husband, reading a good book, or caring for their cats, chickens, and dogs in northern Minnesota.

PRAISE FOR *ICE-OUT*

“With compelling detail, Mary Casanova weaves true historical characters and events with the fictional story of young Owen, a character determined to fight the odds. In this gripping adventure, Rainy Lake becomes a metaphor for life and possibilities: the deadly risks of the capricious ice in winter, the strength that comes from natural beauty.”

—POLLY CARLSON-VOILES, author of *Summer of the Wolves*

“Mary Casanova gives us the best of historical fiction: characters you love and love to travel with in a critical time in American history. Following Owen Jensen through his coming-of-age year in northern Minnesota during Prohibition is a rugged joy. This is a great book.”

—CHRIS CRUTCHER, author of *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* and *Whale Talk*

“A historical novel that makes the past as fresh and compelling as the present, *Ice-Out* is a story of dreams, determination, loyalty, and the greys that infuse black and white issues. Mary Casanova has created a hero we cheer for as he struggles to surmount obstacles placed before him by the times, by place, and by his own choices.”

—**LORNA LANDVIK**, author of *Best to Laugh* and *Mayor of the Universe*

“A unique look at a familiar period in history.”

—**KIRKUS REVIEWS**

“Mary Casanova has a sure touch when she describes the laconic exchanges between neighbors, the skin-burning cold of a Minnesota winter or the deadly consequences of misjudging an icy road.”

—**STAR TRIBUNE**

“This novel has a perfect sense of place; readers can feel the cold, understand the fear of booze-runners who drive across dangerously thin ice. They can sympathize with Owen’s need to become an important man in a small town not far from Canada. His struggle with right and wrong will ring true to any teen.”

—**PIONEER PRESS**

“The combination of period detail and relatable characters makes this book appealing to teens with an interest in the Prohibition era.”

—**VOYA**

“Both a thought-provoking narrative and a fast-paced adventure await readers in this novel.”

—**COOK COUNTY NEWS HERALD**

ABOUT THE BOOK

Walking on thin ice: on Rainy Lake, in the northern reaches of Minnesota, it's more than a saying. And for Owen Jensen, nineteen and suddenly responsible for keeping his mother and five brothers alive, the ice is thin indeed.

Ice-Out returns to the frigid and often brutal Prohibition-era borderland of Mary Casanova's beloved novel *Frozen*, and to the characters who made it a favorite among readers of all ages. Owen, smitten with *Frozen*'s Sadie Rose, is struggling to make something of himself at a time when no one seems to hold the moral high ground. Bootlegging is rife, corruption is rampant, and lumber barons run roughshod over the people and the land. As hard as things seem when his father dies, stranding his impoverished family, they get considerably tougher—and more complicated—when Owen gets caught up in the suspicious deaths of a sheriff and deputy on the border.

Inspired by real events in early 1920s Minnesota, and by Mary Casanova's own family history, *Ice-Out* is at once a story of young romance against terrible odds and true grit on the border between license and responsibility, rich and poor, and right and wrong in early twentieth-century America.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Ice-Out* is set in 1922 on the northern Minnesota border. Prohibition has been in full swing since 1922 and bootlegging has become a “cottage industry.” Why did Casanova choose this time period to write a coming-of-age story about a young man trying to make something of himself?
2. When the novel opens, Owen Jensen is 19-years old. It's a cold winter night and he steps out of The White Onion with a check in his pocket. Why did the author choose to start Owen's story at this particular moment? What does the check signify and set in motion?
3. The novel is peppered with several passages in italics. Most of them reflect what's going on regarding seasonal changes in the weather and with the lake. But these passages seem to do more than that.

They're written from Owen's point of view in 2nd person. What purpose do you think the author hoped these short passages might serve?

4. The novel is based on actual events that took place in 1922, as well as the county's leading bootlegger and sheriff. What moral dilemmas does the author bring up by focusing pitting Mr. Pengler, a leading bootlegger, against the zealous sheriff? How do you think these characters and their subsequent conflict reflect what might have been happening nationally in the 1920s?

5. The unsecured border made bootlegging relatively easy. High-quality booze came directly from Canada where distilleries were still regulated at his time. What was the price of consuming home-made brews, sometimes called 'rotgut'? What were the pros and cons of regulating alcohol? Does this story change or alter your thinking in any way about the prohibition of certain drugs today?

6. What's at stake for Owen? What is the personal cost of his carrying on the family creamery business at the cost of his own dreams? Can you relate to a time when you had to make a significant choice at a "fork in the road" of your life?

7. How does Owen go from judging his father to appreciating his father—or at least some aspects of his father's character?

8. The author, at book's end, makes reference to the parallels between Owen's early years and those of her own father. Writing Owen's story seems to have helped Casanova better understand her own father's journey. Are there family stories or histories that haunt you or that you wish you better understood? Would writing about them, whether in journal form, memoir, or fiction be a useful tool?

9. *Ice-out* is a sudden thawing of lake ice, often precipitated by turbulent winds that break the ice into great sheets. It often happens violently, quickly, and signals a new season. At what point is Owen 'iced-in' or locked within himself? Does it make you think about ways in which we might go against our true selves? What decision(s) does Owen make to eventually lead to his 'thaw' or to being set free?

10. Though Mary Casanova grew up in St. Paul, she and her husband moved to the Minnesota-Canadian border shortly after college. How does her love of wilderness come through in *Ice-Out*?

11. Casanova is working on a third novel in this Rainy Lake trilogy. From the moment Trinity stepped onto the page in her first novel, *Frozen*, Casanova knew this was a character not to be ignored. Trinity is based loosely on Virginia Roberts, daughter of a wealthy family who owned an island where they docked their yacht, Virginia. In the first book, Trinity and Sadie Rose become unlikely friends. In the second, Trinity has just returned from the asylum in St. Peter, Minnesota. She and Owen share a friendship. What might you hope to learn about Trinity in the third book?

12. Mary Casanova admits that *Ice-Out* is perhaps her darkest book yet, dominated by many historical events in her area in 1922. Though the story takes several tragic turns, does Owen's story offer hope at the story's end? If so, how?

13. Much of the story happens without Sadie Rose present, yet Owen thinks of her constantly and reminisces about times they've shared. Though he wants a future together, he seems to have come to a place of letting go of her by story's end. Why is this important for him personally? How would he have moved on if Sadie Rose had not wanted a future together? How will he be a better partner in the years ahead because of what he's learned along the way? Can you think of times in life when you've had to learn to let go, without knowing the consequences? Why is learning to "let go" important in life's journey?

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