Discussion questions for *Dark Tide: The Great Boston Molasses Flood of 1919*

What surprised you most about the story of the molasses flood?

If you had been told about the flood in the past, how did this account differ from the stories you had heard?

What did you think about the way this historic event was presented? How did the focus on individual characters and their unique experiences help tell the story?

Which character did you find most compelling, and why?

Dark Tide is written in a narrative style, through the eyes of characters. How does this style compare with other works of history you've read? Does the narrative style enhance or hinder your understanding of the history and the time period?

Were all sides of the issue presented fairly? Did the author give proper consideration to all possible reasons for the tank's collapse?

If a similar disaster were to happen today, how do you think the lawsuits, trial, courtroom proceedings, and public reaction would differ from what happened in *Dark Tide*?

Did you agree with Hugh Ogden's ruling that USIA was liable for the disaster?

Do you think society today is more — or less — sympathetic to big corporations like USIA?

The book paints a vivid picture of Boston's North End and its immigrant population, and discusses how social attitudes toward Italians helped USIA erect the molasses tank with little resistance. Can you imagine a similar scenario today?

Dark Tide looks at major historical issues of the day through the prism of the molasses flood: the anarchist movement, immigration, World War I, etc. How much did you know about these topics? Did the book help you learn — or learn more — about these issues? Talk about these issues in the context of the time period and the flood story.

If you hadn't been involved with this book club, would you have chosen to read *Dark Tide* on your own? Do you typically read non-fiction or history?

After reading *Dark Tide*, do you want to read other books about related topics (Boston history, the anarchist movement, other "engineering" disasters, anything written by Steve Puleo?)