

Reading Group Questions

Cleo Coyle's Coffeehouse Mysteries #1 and #2

The following reading guide was inspired by a set of questions composed by Jane Reed for a reading group discussion conducted at Java.net Books and Gifts, a coffeehouse and bookstore located in Missouri. These questions may spark your own reading group discussion or help to keep it going. Feel free to skip any of these questions or add your own.

On What Grounds by Cleo Coyle

Coffeehouse Mystery #1

1. Cleo Coyle starts all of her books with a brief prologue showing the reader a glimpse of an unknown killer. What did you learn about the killer in the prologue of *On What Grounds*? What personality traits did this person seem to have? What clues did the author plant in the prologue to help you spot the killer later in the story?
2. What was Clare's sweet deal at the beginning of the book? What is the surprise element of the deal? Would you have accepted the conditions of this deal as Clare did? Why do you think she did?
3. What did you think of the character Matt Allegro when you first met him? What is your evaluation of Matt? What are his positive and negative traits? Did your opinion of him change during the course of the story?
4. What is Clare's relationship with her staff? Do any of them remind you of your own co-workers, past or present?
5. Why do you think coffee is so important to Clare Cosi? Did you learn anything new about coffee-making or coffee that you didn't know before you read *On What Grounds*?

6. What did you think of the character Madame Dreyfus-Allegro-Dubois, owner of the Village Blend coffeehouse that Clare manages? What are Madame's positive and negative traits?
7. At the end of Chapter 19, Detective Mike Quinn tells Clare, "Darkness can't hide. Not forever. Not even in the vastness of space." What do you think he meant by this? What does this tell you about Mike Quinn?
8. There were a number of murder suspects in the book. Who did you think had a motive to kill the victim, Anabelle Hart?
9. Did you like or dislike the murder victim? Why was she attacked? Do you think she was a completely innocent victim? Did she deserve what happened to her?
10. Do you think Clare will get back together with her ex-husband, Matt? Or do you think Detective Quinn and Clare have a future? Or do you think neither man will get together with Clare?
11. How did you feel about the book's ending? What do you think the author was trying to say in this mystery tale? Do you agree or disagree with it?
12. At the end of Chapter 18, the dance instructor Cassandra Canelle tells Clare that the reason for art, in her view, is "to lift us up again when we are pressed down." Do you agree with Cassandra or not?
13. As the first book in a mystery series, this story defines the setting for the rest of the books. Did you think the setting of a coffeehouse in Greenwich Village, New York, was well defined? If the Village Blend were a real coffeehouse near you, would you be a regular customer?
14. Are you interested in reading more of the series? If so, what are the elements in this story that make you want to read another?
15. What question would you ask the group?

Reading Group Questions

Through the Grinder by Cleo Coyle

Coffeehouse Mystery #2

1. *Through the Grinder* continues Cleo Coyle's technique of beginning the novel with the viewpoint of an unknown assailant. What assumptions can you make about the assailant in the prologue? What personality traits does this person seem to have? What clues did the author give you in the prologue to help you spot the killer later in the story?
2. Why was the character of Clare's daughter, Joy, important to the plotline?
3. How did Cleo Coyle use on-line and speed-dating programs to build the plot of her murder mystery? What characters were added through this plot device? What do you think Coyle was trying to say about this type of dating?
4. How did the character of Clare's ex-husband, Matt Allegro, continue to develop in this book? What role does he still play in Clare's life?
5. Was Bruce Bowman Mr. Right for Clare? If so, why? If not, why not?
6. What did you learn about Detective Mike Quinn in this book? Why did he want to have dinner with Clare? Do you think there were things left unsaid between them?
7. Did you agree with Detective Quinn in thinking that Bruce Bowman was a possible murder suspect? What clues did the author give you that made this a possibility?
8. Did you think that Clare was right in believing that Mike Quinn had a *personal* reason for suspecting Bruce Bowman of murder?

9. Did you believe that Brooks Newman was the killer? If so, what made you think this? What other characters did you suspect of being the murderer?

10. Why are coats important in this book?

11. After Clare's dinner with Bruce Bowman, she has a dream about her ex-husband. What do you remember about the dream? Why do you think the author put that dream in the book?

12. What was the final clue that helped Clare realize who the real murderer was? Did you see this coming? Were you surprised by what happened right after Clare realized who the murderer was?

13. What did you think of the author's choice to end the book the way she did? What does the author allow to happen by making this plot choice?

14. At the close of the book, Clare says, "Thomas Paine, that fiery soul who died two centuries ago in Greenwich Village, once said, "We have it in our power to begin the world over again." What do you think the author was trying to say with this quote? Do you agree or disagree with it?

15. The next novel in this series is *Latte Trouble*. Are you interested in reading the next book in this series? If so, what are the elements about this story that make you want to read another in the Coffeehouse Mystery series?

16. What question would you ask the group?

FINAL NOTE: Cleo Coyle enjoys hearing from readers. She invites you to post to her on her "Coffee Talk" message board at www.CoffeehouseMystery.com or write to her at VillageBlend@aol.com.