

Death of a Cozy Writer Discussion Questions

by G.M. Malliet

Author Bio: (from Fantastic Fiction & gmmalliet.com)

G. M. Malliet worked as a journalist and copywriter for national and international news publications and public broadcasters. Malliet attended Oxford University and holds a graduate degree from the University of Cambridge.



Malliet's first novel, **Death of a Cozy Writer**, won the 2008 Agatha Award for Best First Novel and was chosen by Kirkus Reviews as a Best Book of 2008. It was nominated for many awards, including the Anthony, the Macavity, and a Left Coast Crime award for best police procedural. Her subsequent mysteries and short stories have been nominated for nearly every major crime-writing award. She and her husband live in the US and travel often to the UK, the setting for all her books.

Characters:

- **Sir Adrian Beauclerk-Fisk** - A famous writer of mystery novels in the "cozy" genre. Sir Adrian has 4 adult children and an ex-wife, Chloe. He called his children together to tell them that he is affianced to a woman named Violet.
- **Ruthven Beauclerk** - Sir Adrian's eldest son. Ruthven was heir-apparent to his father's vast fortune, until his father unexpectedly announced plans to remarry. Ruthven is married to Lillian.
- **Lillian Beauclerk** - Ruthven's social-climbing wife.
- **Sarah Beauclerk-Fisk** – Sir Adrian's daughter. She writes religious inspired cookbooks.
- **Albert Beauclerk-Fisk** - Sir Adrian's youngest son. He's a failed actor and the designated black sheep of the family. Albert's one remaining ambition was to protect his sister Sarah from suspicion of murder.
- **George Beauclerk-Fisk** – Sir Adrian's Ne'er-do-well son, failed entrepreneur, and playboy.
- **Chloe, Lady Beauclerk-Fisk** - Sir Adrian's former wife and the mother of his children.
- **DCI Arthur St. Just** – Detective Inspector tasked with solving the murders at Sir Adrian's home.
- **Mrs. Butter** - Sir Adrian's former secretary. Albert enlisted her help in learning what the secretive Adrian had been plotting.
- **Quentin Coffield, Esq.** – An estate lawyer who worked for Sir Adrian and his propensity to change his will, at will.
- **Manda Croom** - Ruthven's efficient business associate and once-besotted paramour.
- **Agnes Grant** – A cook who bore witness to a crime long, long ago in Scotland.
- **Violet Mildenhall** - Notorious in her heyday due to the death of her former husband. Is engaged to Sir Adrian.

- **Constable Porter, Sergeant Garwin Fear, and Dr. Malenfant** - Loyal aides-de-camp to Detective Inspector St. Just of the Cambridgeshire Constabulary.
- **Maria Romano** - Sir Adrian's long-time cook. She is the only person at Waverly Court who seemed to have a soft spot for the cantankerous author.
- **Paulo Romano** - Butler to Sir Adrian. Mrs. Romano's son.
- **Jeffrey Spencer** - Sir Adrian's secretary, an earnest American expat in search of his roots.
- **William Watters** – Sir Adrian's elderly gardener.
- **Natasha Wellings** - George's latest girlfriend: slim, dark, and beautiful.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. Mystery novels have been written from a variety of viewpoints—first person, alternating point of view, and so on. What point of view is used in *Death of a Cozy Writer*? Why do you think the author chose to tell the story this way? What are the drawbacks to a writer in using a particular point of view—for example, first person—to tell a crime story?
3. Why do you think the relationships in the Beauclerk-Fisk family are so acrimonious? What would cause those types of feelings in a family?
4. Of the four grown children of Sir Adrian, Ruthven appears to be the favorite (insofar as Sir Adrian favors anyone). Do you think most parents have a secret preference for one child over another?
5. How much do you think Chloe, Lady Beauclerk-Fisk is responsible for the failings, or the successes, of her various offspring?
6. The reader does not see Detective Inspector St. Just until the midpoint of the book. Did keeping him off the “main stage” for so long help or harm the story?
7. Did the 2nd murder come as a surprise or were you expecting it?
8. What do you think about the author's portrayal of Americans? Do you think this portrayal is a stereotype or basically true?
9. “*Death of a Cozy Writer*” has been called an affectionate parody of the traditional or “cozy” mystery genre. The author calls it an homage to the golden age of the classic British mystery. What key elements do you think constitute a traditional mystery? How is this book different from a traditional mystery? How does it play off the traditions of the genre?
10. Why do you think the author went out of her way to make the main characters of the story unlikable? Was there any one character in the book you particularly “loved to hate,” and why?
11. Which of the characters in “*Death of a Cozy Writer*” would you like to get to know better?
12. How does the weather reflect the atmosphere inside Waverley Court?

13. How important is the Christmas holiday season to the story? How would the story have been different if set in a different season?
14. The novel has several red herrings. Were you misled by any of these? Were you able to guess “who done it,” or did the author surprise you? If you were surprised, who did you think was the murderer, and what was his or her motive?
15. “Death of a Cozy Writer” belongs to the “fair-play” school of crime writing. Once you learned who the culprit was, did you feel the author had “played fair” in providing you the clues needed to solve the crime?
16. Discuss the author’s use of humor in the book. (My favorite is when the author called the assisted living facility a “Home for Wrinklies.”) Is humor ever appropriate to a murder mystery?
17. “Death of a Cozy Writer” is also the story of a death in Violet’s past. How successful is the author in bridging the past with the present?
18. In what ways do you think Sarah’s future will be altered by the events of this book?
19. Malliet has written 10 books with 3 in the St. Just Mystery series. Will you read any of them?

References:

- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/m/g-m-malliet/>
- Goodreads – <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3330261-death-of-a-cozy-writer>
- GM Malliet - <http://gmmalliet.com/>
- Master the Possibilities - <http://www.masterthepossibilities.com/images/classes/2013/winter/Death%20of%20a%20Cozy%20Writer%20Cast%20of%20Characters.pdf>
- Novelist – <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/novp/detail?vid=2&sid=3246bea6-69d5-4f3c-9e5c-a5cbb9043137%40sessionmgr101&bdata=JnNpdGU9bm92cC1saXZl#UI=265787&db=neh>

GM Malliet's Books

St. Just Mystery

1. Death of a Cozy Writer (2008)
2. Death and the Lit Chick (2009)
3. Death At the Alma Mater (2010)

Max Tudor

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| 1. Wicked Autumn (2011) | 5. The Haunted Season (2015) |
| 2. A Fatal Winter (2012) | 6. Devil's Breath (2017) |
| 3. Pagan Spring (2013) | 7. In Prior's Wood (2018) |
| 4. Demon Summer (2012) | |

If you liked Death of a Cozy Writer, try...

- A Mourning Wedding – Carola Dunn
 - Banana Cream Pie Murder – Joanne Fluke
 - All the Little Liars – Charlaine Harris
 - The Body in the Piazza – Katherine Hall Page
 - Pushing Up Daisies – MC Beaton
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