

A Welcome Murder Discussion Questions

by Robin Yocum

Author Bio: (from Fantastic Fiction)

Robin Yocum was born in Steubenville, Ohio and was raised in a small town in Eastern Ohio. He is the president of Yocum Communications, a public relations and marketing firm in Westerville, Ohio. Well known for his work as a crime and investigative reporter with the Columbus Dispatch from 1980 to 1991, he was the recipient of thirty local, state, and national journalism awards in categories ranging from investigative reporting to feature writing.



Characters:

- **Johnny Earl** – Just out of prison for Cocaine dealing. Formerly was a high school superstar athlete in Steubenville, OH. Very competitive. Played in baseball's minor leagues until he was injured. Took up construction work and drugs.
- **Dena Marie Conchek Androski Xenakis** – Johnny Earl's high school girlfriend. Former Homecoming Queen. Pathological liar. Married twice and has two kids. Currently married to Smoochie Xenakis. Had an affair with Royce and Sheriff Roberson. Works as a cashier at the local grocery store.
- **Rayce Daubner** – Steubenville football player with Johnny Earl. Gets Johnny Earl into drugs and dealing. Becomes a federal informant and turns Johnny Earl into Drug Enforcement. Is murdered not long after Johnny Earl gets out of prison.
- **Mildred Goins** – Steubenville resident. Shot her abusive husband and killed him.
- **Alaric Himmler** – Johnny Earl's bunkmate in prison. General in the "New Order of the Third Reich" in the Aryan Republic of New Germania.
- **Preacher** – In jail with Johnny Earl. Is the Preacher for the "New Order of the Third Reich" in the Aryan Republic of New Germania.
- **Toots Majowski** – Chief Deputy Sheriff of Jefferson County.
- **Shirley McConaughey** – Secretary for Mr. Oswald.
- **Alison Roberson** – Sheriff Roberson's wife. Chief dispatcher for Jefferson County. Hates Steubenville. Met Fran when she was a secretary at the FBI training center. Has two sons. She is spearheading Fran's political campaign for Congressman in order to get out of Steubenville.
- **Sheriff Francis Roberson** – Sheriff of Jefferson County (which includes Steubenville.) Started off in the FBI White Collar Crimes division. His goal is to be president of the United States. Wife Allison. Father Edgar. Fran doesn't really like being a police officer but is Sheriff for political reasons.
- **Mr. Oswald** – Smoochie Xenakis' boss.
- **Sabatino** – Smoochie's lawyer.
- **Alfred Vincenzo** – FBI Agent. Former coworker of Fran (his nemesis). Vain. Allison dated him before Fran. Sent to look into Daubner's death. Partner is Agent Elvis Norwine.

- **Matthew Vincent “Smoochie” Xenakis** – Pastor’s son. Called Smoochie because he has big lips. Picked on by Rayce Daubner in High School. Currently married to Dena. Self-proclaimed coward. Assistant social director of Ohio Valley Hospital. Brother is Luke. Adopted Dena’s children. Was beat up when he confronted Rayce about his affair with Dena.
- **Officers in the Jefferson County Sheriff’s office:** Deputy Phillip Gearhard, Detective Stan Borkowski, Deputy Wagner, JC Fairbanks (screwup).

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. This book is written with alternating chapter depicting 5 different character viewpoints. Was it well done? Was it effective? Did you like this style of writing? Why or why not?
3. One review calls **A Welcome Murder** a “sordid tale of small town rivalries and competition.” What do you think of this characterization of the book?
4. Another reviewer called this "rust belt noir." Do you think that is an accurate description if the book? Why or why not? Can you think of a better one?
5. Who was your favorite character? Who was your least favorite? Why? Do you think the author intended for many of the characters in the story to be unlikable? Why would he do that?
6. Johnny Earl head butts Sheriff Francis Roberson so that he can stay in jail. What do you think is worse – head-butting a Sheriff or having to meet up with white supremacists? What choice would you have made?
7. No one in this book (beside Alison Roberson) seems to think that infidelity is a big deal. Why do you think they take that stance? What do you think?
8. Why was Rayce Daubner being a federal informant so important to the sheriff?
9. If you had an employee/coworker questioned about a murder, would you be careful with/scared of with them? Would you ask them about it?
10. Smoochie’s brother, Luke, tells Smoochie (Vincent) that the murder suspicion is a perfect opportunity to change his image... and Smoochie goes for it to the point of changing his name. Do you agree with the way Vincent goes about changing his image? How would you have done it?
11. Smoochie takes his newfound “Bad” reputation and betters his life. How does he get away with it? Is it honest?
12. Who is the worst/least moral character in the book – Rayce, Johnny Earl, Dena, Fran, Allison, Smoochie, Toots, etc.? Why do you think that?
13. Did you know who set Rayce Daubner’s house on fire before it was revealed? Was the reasoning behind the arson justified?
14. Did you know who the killer was before it was revealed?
15. The Preacher and General were set up to take the fall for Rayce’s death. How do you feel about that?

16. Fran, the Sheriff, knows that there is something “off” about the Preacher and General’s arrest. Why does he go along with it?
17. Johnny Earl turns himself into a legitimate businessman, but can only do it outside of Steubenville. Why is it hard for a homegrown boy to change in a small home town?
18. At the end of the book, Fran publically accuses Smoochie of the murder, even though Fran doesn’t believe Smoochie did it. Why would he do that?
19. The previous Jefferson County Sheriff was “on the take” and eventually left the office under a cloud of corruption. Is Sheriff Francis Roberson any better? Worse? No change?
20. Yocum has written a total of 5 books. Will you read any of the other books?

References:

- Terry Ambrose – <http://terryambrose.com/2017/05/review-a-welcome-murder/>
- Book Reporter – <https://www.bookreporter.com/authors/robin-yocum>
- Book Series in Order – <https://www.bookseriesinorder.com/robin-yocum/>
- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/y/robin-yocum/>
- Novelist – <http://oh0142.oplin.org:2072/novp/detail?vid=3&sid=fc181dde-6545-4d72-8993-336a0b42c0e4%40sessionmgr4006&bdata=JnNpdGU9bm92cC1saXZl#UI=10559735&db=neh>

Robert Yocum’s Books

Stand-Alone Novels

- Favorite Sons (2011)
- The Essay (2012)
- A Brilliant Death (2016)
- A Welcome Murder (2017)
- A Perfect Shot (2018)

If you liked A Welcome Murder, try...

- Cat on a Cold Tin Roof – Mike Resnick
- Watch Your Back – Donald Westlake
- Tishomingo Blues – Elmore Leonard
- Too Lucky to Live – Annie Hogsett
- Speaking of Murder – Les Roberts