

Cocaine Blues Discussion Questions

Kerry Greenwood

Author Bio:

Kerry Greenwood was born and lives in a Melbourne suburb. She has a degree in English and Law from Melbourne University. Kerry Greenwood has worked as a folk singer, factory hand, director, producer, translator, costume-maker, cook, and is currently a solicitor (lawyer). When she is not writing, she works as a locum solicitor for the Victorian Legal Aid. For fun Kerry reads science fiction/fantasy and detective stories. She is not married, has no children and lives with a registered wizard. (<http://www.phrynefisher.com/aboutkerry.html>)

The Phryne Fisher book series currently has 20 books in it.

This books series was turned into an Australian television series called *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries* which has run 2 seasons (2012 & 2013) so far. (Wikipedia)

Character List:

- **Phryne Fisher** – (Fry-knee - rhymes with briny) – A well-to do young woman asked to look into Lydia Andrews many illnesses by Lydia's parents.
- **John Andrews** – Lydia Andrews husband.
- **Lydia Andrews** – A well-off young married woman who falls ill whenever her husband is around.
- **Butcher George** – A back-alley abortionist and rapist.
- **Princesse de Grasse** – Russian expatriate. Grandmother to Sasha and Elli De Lisse.
- **Elli de Lisse** – A female Russian dancer. Twin to Sasha De Lisse. Grandson of Princesse de Grasse.
- **Sasha de Lisse** – A male Russian dancer. Twin to Elli De Lisse. Grandson of Princesse de Grasse.
- **Alice Greenham** – A sick young woman picked up by Bert and Cec's cab. She is the latest victim of Butcher George.
- **Bert** (Albert Johnson) – A cab driver. A friend of Cec.
- **Dorothy (Dot)** – A woman hired by Phryne as confidential maid and social secretary
- **Dr. Elizabeth MacMillan** – A female surgeon at the Queen Victoria Hospital for Women.
- **Detective-Inspector Jack Robinson** – Melbourne police officer.
- **Cec (Cecil Yates)** – A truck driver and friend of Bert. Soft-hearted and known for taking in strays of all kinds.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book?
2. What do you think of the title of the book?
3. What time period is this book set in? The date is never explicitly stated, so how did you know? Did you like reading about this time period?
4. The book is set Australia. Does the exotic (to us) locale help or hurt the book? Do you think the average American knows enough about Australian culture and history to get all of the lingo and cultural references?
5. How old do you think Phryne is? Is her age significant to the story?
6. The author portrays flappers as feminist figures with agency and guts, while many other sources depict them as silly and giggly girls. What do you think about Greenwood's interpretation? Would you consider Phryne to be a flapper?
7. There are some very distinctive social class differences between the characters in the book. Do you think these classes are especially noticeable in the book due to the time period or the English/Australian culture? Does social class affect the mystery/story?
8. Phryne draws her gun and puts the barrel on the back of Burt's neck as a method of haggling taxi fare. This scene appears to be a perfectly normal thing from Bert's perspective. Why do you think that is? What does this tell you about each character?
9. In the book, Phryne mentions her gun a number of times. What does the gun mean to her, as a symbol, and to you, as a reader?
10. Phryne's other possessions are described in great detail. Do we learn about her character and opinions through these descriptions or are they mostly color?
11. What are Phryne's strengths?
12. Phryne can do a number of things that set her apart from other characters. Do these traits strike you as realistic for a wealthy person with a lot of free time? Are they suitable in a heroine in this sort of book?
13. Does Phryne develop as a character during the novel? If she does, how?
14. What are Phryne's weaknesses? From the author's perspective, what function do they serve?
15. There are a number of supporting characters in this novel. Are they there to provide color to the novel or are they essential to solving the mystery? Are they essential for the things they do or the things they know?
16. How did the side story of Butcher George and Alice Greenham play into the larger Lydia mystery? In your opinion, did it help or hurt the story?
17. What use does Dr. Elizabeth MacMillian have in the book/to the mystery? Did you like her character?
18. Did you know who was poisoning Lydia before it was revealed?
19. Did you know who the Cocaine distributor was before it was revealed?
20. The Phryne Fisher series has (at current count) 20 books in it. Greenwood also has 4 other series. Are you planning on reading any more of Greenwood's books?

Extras:

TV Tie-In book cover



Original book cover



References:

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