

My Sister's Grave Discussion Questions

by Robert Dugoni

Author Bio: (from Fantastic Fiction & Robert Dugoni's website)

Robert Dugoni is a writer turned lawyer turned writer. He was born in Idaho and raised in Northern California the middle child of a family of ten siblings. Dugoni jokes that he didn't get much of a chance to talk, so he wrote. By the seventh grade he knew he wanted to be a writer.



Dugoni is the recipient of the Nancy Pearl Award for Fiction and a two-time winner of the Friends of Mystery Spotted Owl Award for best novel set in the Pacific Northwest. He is also a two-time finalist for the International Thriller Award, the Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction, the Silver Falchion Award for mystery, and the Mystery Writers of America Edgar Award.

Robert Dugoni's books are sold in more than twenty-five countries and have been translated into more than two dozen languages.

Characters:

- **Tracy Crosswhite** – (42) – “The Professor.” Seattle Police Homicide detective. Police partner is Kinsington Rowe.
 - In 1993, her sister Sarah went missing and is presumed dead. Shooting champion @ 22 years old. Engaged/married/divorced from Ben. Was a high school Chemistry teacher before becoming a police officer. Father, James, is a well-respected doctor.
- **Roy Calloway** – Cedar Grove Sheriff both in 1993 and currently. Very good friends with Doc James Crosswhite.
- **Delmo Castigliano** – Homicide detective. Faz's partner.
- **James Crosswhite** – Well-respected doctor in Cedar Grove in 1993. Married and has two daughters, Tracy and Sarah. Sarah goes missing in 1993.
- **Sarah Crosswhite** – Tracy's 18-year-old sister. Goes missing after a shooting tournament. Edmond House is convicted of her murder in 1993. Body found 20 years later in a shallow grave under a formerly flooded area.
- **DeAngelo Finn** – House's court appointed lawyer in the Sarah Crosswhite trial. His last case before he retired.
- **Ryan Hagan** – Salesman who said he saw a red pickup (House's car) near Sarah's abandoned truck on the day she disappeared.
- **Nicole Hansen** – Murdered dancer. Hog tied and strangled by the rope. One of Tracy and Kins' cases. Case is going cold.
- **Edmond House** – Convicted rapist. Recently paroled in 1993. Lived with his uncle. Convicted of Sarah's murder. There are inconsistencies in the investigation/trial. Says he was framed for Sarah's murder. Still in prison in 2015.
- **Parker House** – Edmond's uncle. Gives Edmond a place to live after he gets out of prison.

- **Vic Fazio** – “Faz” – Homicide detective. Very Italian.
- **Dan O’Leary** – Childhood friend of Tracy and Sarah from Cedar Grove. Was a criminal defense lawyer in NYC until his divorce. Went back to Cedar Grove.
- **Johnny Nolasco** – Seattle Chief of Investigations and Tracy’s boss. He does not like her due to an incident in the police academy.
- **Kelly Rosa** – Seattle forensic anthropologist. On good terms with Tracy.
- **Kinsington Rowe** – Tracy’s police partner of 6 years. Played 1 year in the NFL. Married with kids.
- **Maria Van Pelt** – Reporter. KRIX Channel 8. Tracy thinks she does a “hatchet job” on news investigations.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. This story is told using vignettes of Tracy’s (and Sarah’s) past, with the majority of the story told in the present. Did having the two timelines work or did you find it confusing? Why or why not?
3. How did you like the pacing of the novel? Did it keep your attention? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think Dugoni, the author, told stories regarding Sarah from when she was younger, rather than just focusing on the time of the abduction? What use do the other stories have to the reader and the pacing of the story?
5. Who was your favorite character? Who was your least favorite character? Why?
6. Tracy feels responsible for her sister’s disappearance and murder. Was she? Why do you think many people feel guilty for things they have no control over?
7. Tracy has a healthy relationship with her partner, Kins, with no romantic slant. Why do you think so many books/TV shows insist that a male/female partnership needs to be romantic? Do you think men and women can work together without romance coming in to it? Why or why not?
8. Do you think Ben, Tracy’s fiancé/husband/ex, was right that her obsession with her sister’s disappearance was hurting their relationships and her health? Do you blame him for leaving? Why or why not?
9. How do you feel about Dan O’Leary, the lawyer? Was he a well-rounded character? What about his interactions with Tracy? Were they true to life? Was his character necessary? Why or why not?
10. How do you feel about Tracy and her obsession with uncovering the truth at all costs... even 20 years later? Did she go into law enforcement for the right reasons? Did your opinion of her change at any time during the book?
11. Based on what Tracy knew at the time, was it proper for her to keep investigating and get Dan to look into House’s trial? Considering how the book ended, was investigating House’s trial the right thing to do?

12. Do you think the sheriff and James Crosswhite did the right thing in the initial investigation? Was it the wrong thing for the right reason? Why?
13. Why do you think Sheriff Calloway didn't tell Tracy the truth once it started to go wrong and the new hearing was empaneled?
14. Why do you think Doctor James Crosswhite did what he did in the end?
15. Did you know who Sarah's killer was before it was revealed?
16. Do you think Tracy made the right decision in the end by solely blaming her father for the coverup?
17. The book starts with the epigraph, "Better that ten guilty persons escape than that one innocent suffer." by Sir William Blackstone. Do you believe that is a true statement? Why or why not? How does this book embody and refute that quote at the same time?
18. Dugoni has written a number of other books. Will you read them?

References:

- Robert Dugoni – <https://www.robertdugonibooks.com/bio>
- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/d/robert-dugoni/>
- GiggleMug – <https://gigglemug.net/2015/02/01/february-2015-my-sisters-grave/>
- GoodReads –
 - <https://www.goodreads.com/topic/show/18930730-my-sister-s-grave-by-robert-dugoni---october-2017>
 - https://www.goodreads.com/topic/list_book/22341263-my-sister-s-grave
 - <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/22341263-my-sister-s-grave>
- Novelist – <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.clevnet.org/novp/detail?vid=2&sid=0b0fa2d2-afdf-425c-a1f5-5d384b8f1631%40sdc-v-sessmgr02&bdata=JnNpdGU9bm92cC1saXZl#UI=10361167&db=neh>

Robert Dugoni's Books

David Sloane

1. The Jury Master (2006)
2. Wrongful Death (2009)
3. Bodily Harm (2010)
4. Murder One (2011)
5. The Conviction (2012)

Tracy Crosswhite

1. My Sister's Grave (2014)
 2. Her Final Breath (2015)
 3. In the Clearing (2016)
 4. The Trapped Girl (2017)
 5. Close to Home (2017)
 6. A Steep Price (2018)
 7. A Cold Trail (2020)
 8. In Her Tracks (2021)
- The Academy (2014)
Third Watch (2015)

Charles Jenkins

1. The Eighth Sister (2019)
2. The Last Agent (2020)
3. The Silent Sisters (2022)

Stand Alone Novels

- Damage Control (2007)
- Hotel Angeline (2011) – Book of short stories by multiple authors
 - The 7th Canon (2016)
- The Extraordinary Life of Sam Hell (2018)
 - The World Played Chess (2021)

Nonfiction

- The Cyanide Canary (2004) (with Joseph Hilldorfer)

If you liked My Sister's Grave, try...

- Before She Disappeared – Lisa Gardner
 - The Prophet – Michael Koryta
 - Until Proven Guilty – J.A. Jance
 - Killing Season – Faye Kellerman
 - Copycat – Erica Spindler
-