

Reading Group Questions

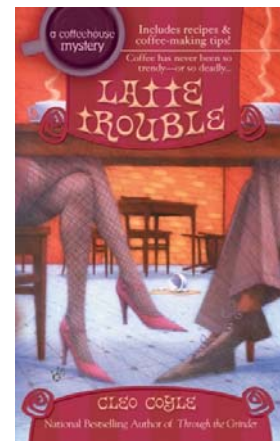
Cleo Coyle's Coffeehouse Mysteries #3 and #4

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 Cuba, Missouri. These questions may spark your own reading group discussion or help to keep it going. Feel free to skip questions or add your own.

***Latte Trouble* by Cleo Coyle**

Coffeehouse Mystery #3

1. As the book opens, a Fall Fashion Week party is being held at the Village Blend, and coffeehouse manager Clare Cosi is worried about her best barista, Tucker Burton. Tucker appears to be upset. Why?
2. Who is Matteo Allegro? And who is Breanne Summour? Why does Clare have a negative view of Breanne? Although Clare and her ex-husband have been divorced for years, do you think Clare still has feelings for Matt? If you read the previous book in the series, *Through the Grinder*, then discuss how that book ended and how that ending might have affected Clare.
3. Who is Lottie Harmon? Why is the Village Blend an important place to her? How are Tad Benedict and Rena Garcia connected to Lottie? If you'd met Lottie at the Village Blend, would you have wanted to work with her?
4. After the poisoning at the party, Detectives Starkey and Hutawa come to the Village Blend to investigate. What makes Tucker Burton appear guilty of murder to "Starkey and Hut"?
5. Clare doesn't believe Tucker murdered anyone. Who does Clare suspect was the intended victim? If you were one of the investigating detectives, would you believe Clare?
6. What is Matt's new plan for the Village Blend? What does Clare think about it? What does Madame think about it and why is her reaction important to both Clare and Matt? Did you learn anything new about coffee from this subplot? How do Matt's coffee plans end up helping Clare's investigation?



7. At the beginning of Chapter 16, Clare has a dream that she's floating in the Hudson River. What does this dream tell you about Clare? What "slip up" does Clare make at the end of this chapter? Why do you think she makes it?
8. If Matt were your ex, do you think you would have let yourself make this same "slip up"? What aspects of Matt's character still make him both a good guy and a bad guy?
9. As Clare investigates this case, which character or characters did you most strongly suspect of wanting Lottie Harmon dead? What were their motives?
10. When Clare finally sees her friend NYPD Detective Mike Quinn in this book, it's on police business. What news does Quinn deliver to the Village Blend? Were you surprised by it? Why does Quinn think Tad has no motive for this second poisoning? Did you doubt Quinn or believe him?
11. Who is Fen and what do we find out about him in the course of the novel?
12. Clare accuses Fen of idealizing a past romantic relationship. Do you think there are parallels between Fen and Matt? Do you think Matt is idealizing his past with Clare?
13. Who is Lottie Toratelli? Who is Mona Lisa Toratelli? Explain how the two Toratellis and Harriet Tasky are all connected to Lottie Harmon.
14. Do you think Harriet Tasky was smart to do what she did? How did her experiences in the fashion industry change her? Do you think today's fashion industry requires that we change ourselves to be considered "acceptable"?
15. What piece of information helped you figure out who the killer really was? What was the killer's motivation? Why did the killer try to poison Lottie with aspirin first and then with cyanide and then with aspirin again?
16. Clearly, the killer was disturbed. Do you also think the killer was justified?
17. At the end of the book Mike Quinn tells Clare: "Maybe you don't get over the bad stuff, but there's usually something good to focus on instead." Do you think the killer—and those people driven by a need for vengeance—would be better off adopting Mike's philosophy?
18. Considering Mike's philosophy as one theme in this book: Do you think that's what Matt is trying to do with Clare: focus on the good things in their present instead of their past troubles? When it comes to Matt, do you think Clare is capable of focusing only on the present?

Reading Group Questions

Murder Most Frothy by Cleo Coyle

Coffeehouse Mystery #4

1. *Murder Most Frothy* continues Coyle's technique of beginning with the viewpoint of an unknown killer. What is the killer's attitude toward the Hamptons' party guests? What assumptions can you make about the killer?

2. Who is David Mintzer? When David offers Clare a summer job in East Hampton, why does she finally decide to take it? Is a "coffee steward" a good idea?

3. Does Clare's daughter Joy need her mother's supervision or would she be better off if Clare left her alone? Is Clare an overprotective mother? Don't girls just want to have fun?

4. Who is shot by the killer in the prologue? Why does Clare think the wrong person is shot?

5. Who is Marjorie Bright? Did you suspect her of being the murderer? Who is Alberta? Did you suspect her of being involved in the crime? Why is Clare suspicious of these two women?

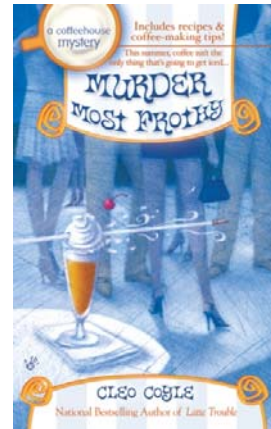
6. What do you think of Madame in this book? Were you surprised by her behavior? Discuss Madame's positive and negative traits. Do any of these traits help her as a sleuth?

7. Matt first met Breanne in the previous novel, *Latte Trouble*. Does Clare have an opinion about how their relationship is developing? Is it any of her business?

8. When you first met Bom Feloes in this book, what did you think of him? Did you think he would be a good match for Clare?

9. How does Clare track down "flipper foot"? Did anything about him surprise you? Why is his background as a Navy SEAL important to the plot?

10. When Clare first meets Jim Rand, what did you think of him? Did you suspect him of being involved with the crime? Did your opinion of him change by the end?



11. How does the subplot involving restaurant manager Jacques Papas contribute to the novel? How do you feel about what Papas did?
12. What do you think of Joy's behavior in this book? Considering the climax, the question might be asked again: Do you think Clare is an overprotective mother?
13. Were you surprised by the revelation of the killer at the end? What did you think of Clare's method of getting a confession?
14. Clare takes more risks in this book than in any previous Coffeehouse Mystery. Can you recall some of these risks? Did her actions surprise you; upset you; or make the book more exciting for you? Jim Rand tells Clare that she's become addicted to the thrill of investigating. Do you think he's right and the thrill of detecting is starting to feel like a jolt of caffeine for Clare Cosi?
15. This book describes the practice of "house shares" in the Hamptons as a way for regular people to afford a vacation where very wealthy people maintain expensive summer homes. Do you think Clare has an opinion about this practice, given her past experience? What does this practice say about our society?
16. Did David Mintzer have "good neighbors"? Do you see any universal truths in this book about people and their neighbors?
17. In the epilogue, Clare muses: *"The Earth itself was just a rental. Our time on it was basically one big share."* Do you agree with Clare when she considers the book's cast of characters and says: *"The quality of our lives might simply boil down to whether or not we can all get along in the same house?"* How do the subplots of this novel support that theme?
18. At the start of Chapter 7, Clare says: *"My grandmother grew up in a world of straightforward sensibilities, when things were labeled simply and clearly. You said what you meant, and you meant what you said. But that was a long time ago, before SNL, MTV, metafiction, The Daily Show, and the saturation of practically every aspect of contemporary culture with irony..."* What do you think the author is saying about the "sensibilities" of today's world? Do you agree?
19. Despite her earlier views, Clare finally decides that a summer fling *"doesn't have to be a crime."* Did that surprise you? Given the end of *Through the Grinder* and *Latte Trouble*, why do you think she gave in to the fling? How do you think her fling will affect her feelings for Mike Quinn?

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.