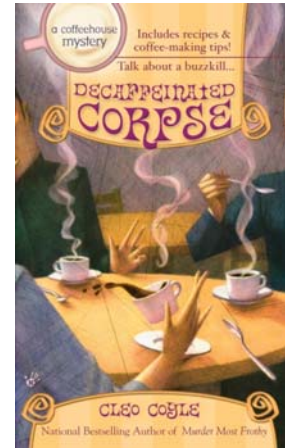


Reading Group Questions

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 20 questions may spark your own reading group discussion or help keep it going. Feel free to skip questions or add your own.

Decaffeinated Corpse by Cleo Coyle



1. The prologue of *Decaffeinated Corpse* begins with an attack. What did the prologue reveal to you about the assailant? How about the intended victim?
2. What revolutionary coffee product is Matt Allegro introducing to the Village Blend and his kiosks? What will be the impact of this product? Do you think the product is a good idea? Would you drink it?
3. Who is Ric Gostwick? What was your impression of Ric in the first few chapters? Did you think he was trustworthy? Did you suspect him of a crime?
4. Who is Mike Quinn? What is his relationship to Clare? Why does Matt not like Detective Quinn? Why is the feeling mutual?
5. Who is Ellie Lassiter and why does Clare track her down at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden? What musical clue (sung by a pop '80s icon) first gives Clare the suspicion that Ellie & Ric have more in common than a love of coffee plants?
6. What was your first impression of Norbert, Ellie's assistant? Did you find his behavior suspicious while Clare was questioning Ellie at the Botanic Garden?
7. Why did Ellie and Clare lose touch after so many years? What role did the life choices of these women play in the decline of their friendship? Do you have any personal insights about the reasons friendships between women sometimes fade?
8. When Clare and Madame notice Ellie changing clothes, they follow her on a low-speed chase to Manhattan. Who does Ellie end up meeting at the hotel? Whose clothes are on this man and why is that important to the mystery plot?
9. After Clare and Madame follow the disguised private investigator back to his office, they sit down with the head of the agency. At this point, who does Clare suspect attacked Ric? What does Madame's ruse tell you about her as a character? What does it reveal about her past? Name some of Madame's positive and negative traits. Would you want her for a mother-in-law?

10. During the coffee-tasting party at the Beekman Hotel, what is Dr. McTavish's "prescription" for Madame? What is her reaction? Whose side were you on?
11. Who is Carlos Hernandez and what is his history with Ric Gostwick and the Gostwick family? What does he try to do during the course of the story? The nationalizing of business (i.e. government takeover of private business) is now a hot button topic in the USA. Do you have any opinions about this?
12. Who is Monika Van Doorn? What interest does she have in Ric? Is she married? Why does that end up mattering?
13. Were you surprised by the body going over the side of the hotel balcony? Whose body did you think it was? Did the reason for Detective Quinn's appearance surprise you? Were you angry at Quinn for arresting Matt? Who did you think murdered both victims? Why?
14. Matt finds out that Ric was working on a side deal with his special coffee beans. What was this deal and why did it jeopardize the Village Blend? Why was Ric's decaffeinated coffee plant cutting important to making this deal work?
15. What was Clare's reaction to her daughter Joy's party dress? How about her new love interest? What did you think of Joy's behavior during the party?
16. At the opening of Chapter 16, Clare has a dream that she's on a corner, watching a traffic light change. She tries to catch a falling body. Who is the body in the dream? What does this dream reveal about Clare?
17. What role does the mechanical voice toy play at the end of the novel? How is having three Zorros important to the mystery's climax?
18. Quinn wasn't allowed to enter the exclusive Halloween party because he didn't have a costume. Do you think wearing a costume is an important theme in this book? Look back over these questions and discuss how people dressed in certain ways throughout this story for certain reasons. What do you think the author was trying to say?
19. Did you learn anything new about coffee in this book?
20. The next novel in this series is *French Pressed*. It involves Matt again, Quinn, Madame, Joy, and Tommy Keitel and his gourmet restaurant. What present characters would you nominate for murder?

FINAL NOTE: Cleo Coyle enjoys hearing from readers. She invites you to post on her "Coffee Talk" message board at www.CoffeehouseMystery.com or write to her at VillageBlend@aol.com