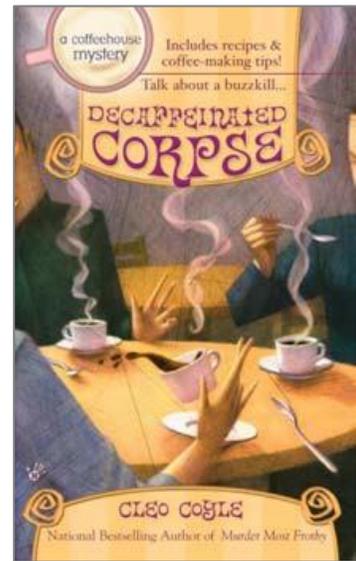


Reading Group Questions Books 5 & 6

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 **Coffeehouse Mystery #5**

Story Summary: Matt's childhood friend, coffee grower Ric Gostwick, develops the world's first naturally decaffeinated coffee plant. When someone tries to kill him, however, Clare must dig up dirt on the handsome botanist. A trail of clues leads to more corpses, a potential scandal, and an international roster of suspects. Recipes include Clare's amazing Cappuccino Muffins and more.



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?
10. Name some of Madame's positive and negative traits. Would you want her for a mother-in-law?
11. 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?
12. 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?
13. Who is Monika Van Doorn? What interest does she have in Ric? Is she married? Why does that end up mattering?
14. 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?
15. 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?

16. 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?

17. 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?

18. 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?

19. 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?

20. Did you learn anything new about coffee in this book?

21. 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 to her on her "Coffee Talk" message board (in the upper right column) of her online coffeehouse at www.CoffeehouseMystery.com or write to her at CoffeehouseMystery@gmail.com.

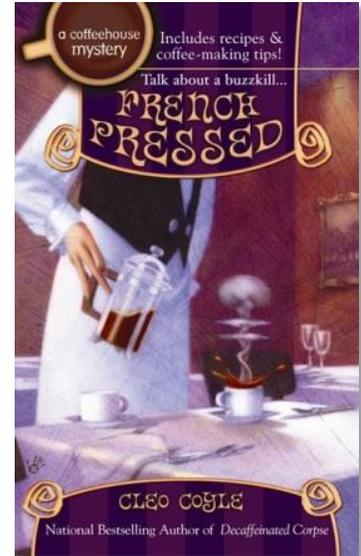
Reading Group Questions Books 5 & 6

The following questions were designed to help lead a reading group through the events in this book's narrative from beginning to end. Ideas are introduced to help spark discussion and encourage the sharing of thoughts and opinions. Feel free to skip any question or add your own.

French Pressed by Cleo Coyle

Coffeehouse Mystery #6

Story Summary: Finishing her culinary studies at New York's hottest French restaurant, Clare and Matt's daughter Joy is getting way too intimate with married chef Tommy Keitel. When things turn deadly, the NYPD marks Joy as a murder suspect. To clear her daughter, Clare must catch the *real* killer. Recipes included.



1. The prologue is in the killer's point of view. What do you learn about the person lurking in the shadows? What do you learn about the victim being stalked? What do you notice about the location and potential scene of the crime? "Stabbing flesh is no big deal..." As you read the book, does this phrase give you a clue to the killer's identity?
2. When we first meet Clare Cosi and Madame in this book, they are dining at a gourmet restaurant, but something ruins the fine dining experience. Madame uses the analogy of a seduction gone wrong. What went wrong? How does this discovery of the restaurant's shortcoming help Clare with her sleuthing strategy later in the book? Does this analogy apply to the larger story, as well?
3. This restaurant is named after the French religious figure Saint Solange. Clare learns the story behind the saint and blanches (page 6). How does the parable of Solange lay the groundwork for the mystery in ***French Pressed***?
4. Who is Brigitte Rouille, and how does her behavior toward Joy affect Clare? What conclusions do you draw about Brigitte?

5. Clare is distressed about her college-age daughter Joy's affair with Tommy Keitel, the older, married head chef of Solange. When Joy begins to open up about how the affair began, what shocked Clare the most? Why do you think it did? How would you feel about Joy's actions if she were your daughter?
6. How does Joy's close friendship with Vinny Buccelli lead to tragedy? Is this tragedy the result of Vinny helping Joy and Tommy Keitel continue their affair?
7. Clare goes undercover at Tommy's restaurant to protect her daughter and investigate Vinny's murder. How does she get into the restaurant's kitchen? What happens in Tommy's cheese cave? What deal does Clare make with Tommy that adversely affects Joy's happiness? Did you find Clare's actions manipulative? Overly protective? Or the understandable actions of a concerned mother?
8. If you were the police officer who found the evidence against Joy, would you have arrested her?
9. Does Clare's relationship with NYPD Detective Mike Quinn help or hinder her desire to help Joy out of her terrible situation? How does Quinn feel about Clare's sleuthing to prove her daughter's innocence?
10. As the mystery unfolds, Clare is forced to see her daughter as an adult. Is she having a difficult time doing so? What is Joy's response to her mom's reluctance to see her grow up? How do you relate to Clare's or Joy's dilemma? Have you faced this situation? As a parent? What about your own memories as a child growing up? Did your parents struggle with seeing you (and treating you) as an adult? Did your feelings change when events changed? For example, when a crisis occurred, did you suddenly want parental intervention? Or was *not* asking for help a way to prove that you could stand on your own two feet? As a parent (or hypothetically if you were a parent) would you prefer your child ask for your help when he or she needs it? Or would it depend on the circumstances?
11. Clare bickers with her ex-husband often. In the end, does Matt Allegro help or hinder Clare? What are your thoughts about the relationship issues in the book? Do aspects of the mystery help Clare make a decision about which man in her life is best for her? Do you agree?
12. Were you surprised by Quinn's behavior when he teams up with Clare for their investigation? Did you think Quinn was taking a risk in helping Clare? If so, why do you think he did that?

13. Clare goes to Brighton Beach, a famous Russian neighborhood of New York, with Esther and her boyfriend, a Russian émigré. Were you afraid for her during this sequence? Or did you find this adventure entertaining and trust Clare to handle herself?

14. Who and what is the Fish Squad? What were they doing in the book? Cleo Coyle often brings back minor characters to play bigger roles in future books. This is true of the Fish Squad. They appear again in ***Espresso Shot*** and in the 10th book in the series, ***Murder by Mocha***. Are you interested in seeing them in action again?

15. Were you surprised how Clare helped Quinn with his sting at the nightclub? Was Quinn right or wrong to involve her? Why do you think he did? Whether he's right or wrong in your own eyes, do you think Mike Quinn see Clare as a damsel in distress or as an equal, like one of the Fish Squad? Does that closer consideration of how Mike sees Clare make a difference in understanding his actions?

16. The term "palate fatigue" is used several times in the book. What does it mean as it pertains to gourmet dining? (See page 211.) Clare learns that Chef Tommy Keitel lives by this philosophy in more ways than one. How does that idea play into the murder mystery? How does it relate to Clare's personal life? Does Quinn have a problem with "palate fatigue"? Why is that important to Clare?

17. Did you ever feel certain you'd solved the murder? Who was your favorite red herring? Who was your favorite character in the book? What was your favorite sequence?

18. Were you surprised by Matt's announcement at the end of the book? Why do you think he made this decision? What does it say about his character? Are you interested in what happens next with these characters in *Coffeehouse Mystery #7, Espresso Shot?*

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