



Murder at the Book Group

Maggie King

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For fans of Anne Canadeo comes a fun and sassy cozy mystery in which one woman must solve the murder of a book group member and untangle a web of secrets hidden by her bookish cohorts.

Hazel Rose never dreamed that the murder mystery book group she and her friend Carlene started would stage a "real "murder.

Nevertheless, on the night when the normally composed Carlene seems unusually angry and rattled, during group discussion she dies after drinking cyanide-spiked tea. Despite a suicide note, Hazel is skeptical; Carlene never seemed suicidal--why else would she make all those plans for her future? Incidentally, Carlene was married to Hazel's ex-husband, and Hazel has always suspected there might be something more to her past than she let on.

How much does anyone really know about Carlene Arness? And did she die by her own hand or someone else's? Hazel begins a search for the truth that produces no shortage of motives, as she unearths a past that Carlene took great pains to hide. And most of those motives belong to the members of her very own book group...

Featuring memorable characters and a wicked sense of humor, "Murder at the Book Group" shows the darker side of a book club where reading isn't about pleasure--it's about payback.

Murder at the Book Group Details

Date : Published December 30th 2014 by Pocket Books (first published December 2nd 2014)

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Author : Maggie King

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From Reader Review *Murder at the Book Group* for online ebook

Erinne says

I really thought this would be a fantastic read, murder and book groups seemed right up my alley, but sadly I struggled to keep all the characters in order and while it had so much potential it left me disappointed.

Rebecca says

Although this is not the type of book I normally read, I gave it a try, reading about a third of the book before giving up on it. I really couldn't get interested in it. There was too much talking and not enough action for me. I also found it hard keeping track of all of the characters. Who said what and how are they related to the murder victim.

Jeannie and Louis Rigod says

This novel introduces a woman author who becomes a sleuth upon seeing a member of the bookclub die in front of her. While the police wants to determine the death to suicide, Hazel Rose just can't. The woman had too much to live for.

Hazel and others try to nose out just what was the deceased's private life...in Los Angeles, CA., prior her sudden return to Virginia.

To me, this book was a bit wordy and it was slightly difficult to get caught up in. The storyline was solid but I did weary of certain details being reiterated multiple times to different persons.

The ending was solid and tied up all loose ends. I will read the next volume.

drey says

I was really intrigued by the premise of a murder occurring in the midst of a book club meeting, which shouldn't be a surprise considering how much I love books... Not that I've ever participated in a book club or group, but I *have* been curious. So I was looking forward to inhaling *Murder at the Book Group*.

And I'm so sorry to say I didn't get into it at all. I gave it the 50-page try (actually, 76 pages), but didn't connect with any of the characters or with the story. The main character *wants* to know more - about her friend Carlene, about Carlene's death - but is a bit too washy-washy to be forthright and come right out and ask. The other book club members are straight from a casting call, from the overly-obnoxiously-opinionated to the secretive to the suspicious.

It's been a long time since I inhaled all available Agatha Christies, and *Murder at the Book Group* brings to mind the style in prose and telling. It's just that Hazel is no Poirot.

drey's rating: Did not finish

This review was originally posted on drey's library

Julie says

Murder at the Book Group Club (Hazel Rose Mysteries) is 2014 Gallery Books publication. I was provided a copy of this book by the publisher and Edelweiss in exchange for an honest review.

A book club gathering designed for discussions about books apparently is more of a gossip and bitch session as well as an opportunity to expound upon one's personal political leanings. Very little discussion of books actually takes place. But, everyone did manage to think about how cyanide would really work as a murder weapon in a mystery novel. So, it's an odd coincidence when the host of gathering dies from ingesting cyanide.

The question then becomes: Was it suicide or murder? Most people that new Carlene are adamant she would never commit suicide, even though Carlene had been distracted the day of her death and she and her husband were separated. So, if it was murder... who hated Carlene enough to want to kill her? Well, apparently this group of oft married and divorced ladies certainly get around. Affairs, secrets and grudges and jealousy are the order of the day leaving the door wide open on possible suspects.

In the whodunit style murder mystery, a wide array of characters is often used and few red herrings are thrown in to keep the reader guessing. I found it hard to keep up with all the people in this one. Who was married to who, having an affair, all the ex-husbands, boyfriends, lovers and so on. I lost the thread a few times because of all the relationship back and forths. I mean these ladies got around. Hazel herself has been married four times and has an on again, off again boyfriend who is a cop. To add to the mix, Hazel was married to Carlene's current husband, Evan at one time. Over time the women had managed to maintain a friendship, however. Hazel thought she knew Carlene fairly well, but has discovered since her death that maybe she never really knew her at all. Whew!

But, by the time I was about 40% into the book I had the characters figured out and the mystery began to really get interesting. Hazel is funny at times and her attempts at crime solving could be great at times. With the help of Vince and Lucy, Hazel finally begins to narrow down the suspects and the reader will not expect the outcome. The book ended on a really great note and by the time I had read the last page, I realized I had rather enjoyed the mystery even after getting off to a rather slow start.

Over all I will give this one a 3.5 rounded to 4 stars.

Miriam Downey says

Read my full review here: <http://mimi-cyberlibrarian.blogspot.c...>

It is the third day of the new year, sleet outside, a quiet house, and a cozy mystery. Could anything be better? Without a care, I picked up Murder at the Book Group by Maggie King and looked up a few hours later, crime solved. My favorite lazy kind of morning.

Carlene and Hazel Rose are the co-founders of a mystery book club. The premise of the club is to read mysteries by geography (kind of an interesting idea). At the current meeting, they are reading mysteries based in Florida. (By the way, the book's setting is Richmond, Virginia.) Several of the members of the club are writers, including Carlene, a mystery writer, and Hazel Rose, a romance novelist. Half-way through the meeting, just after tea has been served, Carlene drops dead, an apparent suicide. No one at the meeting believes that it is a suicide, and later, police reports show that it is cyanide poisoning.

To Hazel Rose, the narrator of the story, it has to be murder, and every member of the club becomes a suspect as she seeks to ferret out the killer. It turns out that while many people know a little bit about Carlene, but not many people know (or have gossiped about) her propensity to have sex with any available man, even though she is married to Evan, Hazel Rose's ex husband. In other words, there are a lot of potential suspects who might have reason to want Carlene dead. Hazel Rose's method is to ask leading questions of the many characters and find out the shocking details of Carlene's life on her way to solving the murder.

Everything becomes very complicated and entangled and more and more characters pile into the plot line. I wished that I had kept a list of characters because I had to keep asking myself about who was who. Maggie King's website introduces you to the main characters with a little character study of each book club member. It's a nice touch and I wish I had found it before I read the book rather than after. You can find the character studies on her blog. This is probably the book's weakness—too many characters with too much information. It was hard to keep it all intact.

You would think from the plot line and the characters that you were in a small village rather than the capital of the state of Virginia. Everything is so intertwined, "Murder She Wrote" style. Hazel Rose is a bumbling sleuth, but we can see her skills developing as the mystery evolves, and there is a moment in Murder at the Book Group when we can see the mystery for her next case evolving. The Cozy Mystery blog has a posting that describes what makes a cozy mystery. I was amused to note that in a cozy mystery, the crime-solver (usually a woman) has a best friend, husband, or partner who is a police officer, a medical examiner, or a detective. In this case, Hazel Rose is in a tentative relationship with a retired detective, Vince.

The review on the Shelf Awareness website concludes: "The amateur sleuth's pseudo-investigative skills and her interactions with a cast of well-drawn small-town characters reveal a deception that ultimately coalesces into a study of human nature and the limits of perception." To me it was a delightful introduction to a new year. I have been in a book group for ten years, and I am certainly glad that Carlene or Helen or Art or Annabel aren't in my group, although it wouldn't hurt to have Kat there to spice things up a bit! Besides that, we drink wine at our book group. Cyanide tea is never an option.

Ukgardenfiend says

This sounded so much like my thing. Murder and book groups - I belong to one - and a complicated story line. However, I have read 65% and stopped. I have just given up trying to keep track of all the complications in the lives of the characters. They marry each other's spouses. Or have affairs with them. Marry 4 times (!) or swap or... And honestly, I think the poison was in the ice not the tea so all their speculation will come to nought as the access could have been done anytime by anyone.... If you want to try and work it out for yourself well, good luck! I needed a white board and lines drawn and arrows to make sense, and just wasn't prepared to go that far.

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

When Carlene Arness is found dead after drinking tea laced with cyanide while hosting the monthly meeting of the book club she co-founded with Hazel Rose, the members are horrified and puzzled by her death. Though a suicide note is found next to her body, none of them believe she was the type to take her own life and Hazel is determined to prove it.

There are a lot of suspects, maybe even too many, as Hazel discovers that Carlene, married to Hazel's first husband, hid a dark past. The book club members too keep secrets that give almost all of them, including Hazel, the motive to want Carlene dead. Sex, blackmail, politics and vengeance are all part of the affray.

Murder at the Book Group has all the ingredients for a good mystery - a layered plot, an interesting cast with plenty of secrets and a great setting for book lovers (the murder takes place during a book club meeting whose membership includes several published and aspiring mystery writers). Unfortunately I never really connected with the main character, Hazel Rose, and since the story is told in the first person I found my attention wandering more often than it should have.

Murder at the Book Group was just barely an 'okay' read for me.

Betty says

A cozy mystery with an intriguing plot. This book could use a good EDITOR as many thoughts that had nothing to do with suicide/murder? While there was no explicit sex, the author seems immersed in it. The number of characters was confusing making tedious to read. It took me awhile before I figured out the MC. Hazel Rose is involved with a book club and at a meeting Carlene, another member dies while drinking poisonous tea. Hazel sets out to find out if it was suicide or murder. Carlene was not well like as she had penance for men regardless rather they married or not. There are a number of twists and turns and the ending was surprising The book continue for a couple more chapters after every was explained.

Disclosure: I received a free copy from the publisher through NetGalley for an honest review. I would like to thank them for this opportunity to read and review the book. The opinions expressed are my own.

Heather Withington says

A slow start and an even slower ending meant that I really did not get on with this book. The reveal happens around 80 pages from the end and is a bit of an anti-climax, with it not really being that surprising or clever. I honestly didn't think it was that believable and I was a bit deflated at the end.

However, Maggie can write incredibly in-depth and well thought out characters, who I did enjoy reading about. But unfortunately it was not enough to improve a dire book.

Jenni Schell says

Sadly, this book was not for me. I had a very hard time getting into it and didn't enjoy the characters.

Teresa Kander says

Murder, books, and a book group....this is a perfect series for me! I fell in love with the well written characters, and only figured out the mystery shortly before it was revealed, which is the way I enjoy my mysteries. I also like the fact that the majority of the characters are middle-aged, which makes them easier for me to relate to these days. I can hardly wait to read more about Hazel and the book group.

Cats of Ulthar February Weird Fiction says

REVIEW: MURDER AT THE BOOK GROUP

A cunning and cleverly posited mystery, MURDER IN THE BOOK GROUP demonstrates that one should be careful when forming a reading club, careful to keep the friends close and the enemies closer. Watch out for the sweet smile which contains malice, and the gentle hand designed to murder. A cosy and literary mystery in a contemporary style, this story presents a clever puzzle and an abundance of possibly scheming suspects.

Odette Cortés says

It's been a while since I read a contemporary mystery book that I really enjoyed. I guess that what really sold me about Murder at the Book Group was that it is about a murder that happens among aspiring mystery writers and readers, which provided a very creative scenario. Although it was about an amateur detective you did get the feeling that Maggie King did her homework, and it translates into the characters. The writing felt smart, concise and plausible, which has been refreshing.

I also liked very much all of the characters, mostly a bunch of middle-aged women that are inquisitive and creative by nature. And what I really enjoyed was the way King begins to unravel the mystery in the novel. Step by step it feels like you have been taken by the hand and not just left behind to marvel in the characters intellect at the end of the mystery. I liked that personally I had solved part of the crime, the rest of it was unexpected and fun to discover, but let us remember that I'm no Sherlock, so probably someone else will be less surprised.

I got this book from NetGalley.

Smitten says

Originally posted on Smitten by Books Blog

2.5 Stars

For fans of: Ellery Adams' Books By The Bay Mysteries

The murder mysteries Hazel Rose typically puzzles over are of the fictional variety, but when fellow book-group member Carlene Arness keels over dead at one of their meetings, Hazel can't help but investigate. Not only did she essentially witness the woman's death, but Carlene was both a friend and the current wife of her former husband, to boot. At first blush, Carlene appears to have committed suicide, but Hazel doesn't buy that for a second – which means it's quite likely that one of the group's own is to blame.

Murder at the Book Group is the first of *Maggie King's Book Group Mysteries*, and I can guarantee it'll be the last I read in the series. I did not enjoy this book. *Murder at the Book Group* gets off to a slow, clumsy, convoluted start and only goes downhill from there. At 400 pages, it's too long by half. The prose is clunky and contains far too many superfluous details, slowing the (already glacial) pace and detracting from the (already muddy) plot. The narration is dull, disjointed, and full of boring digressions. All of the characters' backstories are revealed in excruciating detail via dense blocks of text. There's too much dialogue (none of which rings true) and not enough action, and too many scenes do too little to forward the plot. King never establishes any sort of stakes, making it impossible to care about the outcome. There are way too many characters and none of them are terribly well developed, making it all the more difficult to keep track of who's who. All of the relationships lack authenticity, and everyone's both too nosy and feels compelled to dramatically over-share. The denouement is anticlimactic and ridiculous, and while I like the facts of the mystery's solution, it isn't earned.

It pains me to write this harsh a review, but I had to force myself to read through to the final page. If you ask me, *Murder at the Book Group* is a good idea that's very poorly executed. A deep and thorough edit might have saved this book, but as it stands, I suggest you take a pass.

Reviewed by Kat
