

The Arc of the Swallow – Discussion Questions

1. What is the significance of the title? Would you have given the book a different title? If so, what?
2. What is a mystery? How is it similar to or different from a puzzle? Describe the mystery in the Arc of the Swallow?
3. If a mystery is well-written the reader should suspect a number of characters throughout the story. Which characters did you think committed the crime? Did you guess the culprit before the end?
4. Discuss the mystery aspects of the plotline. How effective was the author's use of plot twists and red herrings? Were you able to predict certain things before they happened, or did the author keep you guessing until the end of the story?
5. How important is the setting to the story? Does the author provide enough background information for you to understand the events in the story?
6. Is the author equally invested in both character and plot? Or, did the author put more effort into developing the story than in creating compelling and believable characters? Were the motivations of the characters believable, or did their actions feel like a means to further the plot?
7. Discuss one of the characters in the book? What are their defining character traits? Who do you like the most and who do you like the least? Which character are you most like?
8. If you could smack any of the characters upside the head, who would it be and why?
9. Besides the main characters, what stood out in the story? The descriptions? The secondary characters? The dialogue? Did you have a favorite character?
10. Agatha Christie wrote in her autobiography about her dislike of mysteries having a romantic subplot. Do you agree or disagree with her views? Did this book have an element of romance? If so, do you feel the love aspect enhanced or detracted from the story?
11. What is the most important part of a mystery or thriller – characterization, action, dialogue or setting? How does the book rate in each of these areas? Do other members of the Book Club agree or disagree?
12. What do you think makes a good mystery book? Would you recommend this work to a non mystery/thriller fan or do you think the work would strictly appeal to fans of the mystery/thriller genre?
13. Do you think you would make a good detective? Why or why not? What types of skills or characteristics might be important when solving mysteries?

Sources: Cam Jansen Super Sleuth Squad Discussion Questions, reading group.com, bookBundlz.com, Dee Garrelson's Mystery Book Club Discussion Questions. Special thanks to Good Neighbor JoAnne Boyer for reading the book and helping to select the questions.