

Discussion with Finn Bell, the author of Dead Lemons

Here are some general questions for mystery books . You may want to think about these questions before the discussion with Finn Bell.

1. Talk about the **characters**, both good and bad. Describe their personalities and motivations. Are they fully developed and emotionally complex? Or are they flat, one-dimensional heroes and villains?

2. What do you **know**...and when do you know it? At what point in the book do you begin to piece together what happened?

3. Good crime writers embed **hidden clues**, slipping them in casually, almost in passing. Did you pick them out, or were you...clueless? Once you've finished the book, go back to locate the clues hidden in plain sight. How skillful was the author in burying them?

4. Good crime writers also tease us with **red-herrings**—false clues—to purposely lead us astray? Does your author try to throw you off track? If so, were you tripped up?

5. Talk about the **twists & turns**—those surprising plot developments that throw everything you think you've figured out into disarray.

- a. Do they enhance the story, add complexity, and build suspense?
 - b. Are they plausible or implausible?
 - c. Do they feel forced and gratuitous—inserted merely to extend the story?
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6. Does the author ratchet up the **suspense**? Did you find yourself anxious—quickly turning pages to learn what happened? At what point does the suspense start to build? Where does it climax...then perhaps start rising again?

7. A good **ending** is essential in any mystery or crime thriller: it should ease up on tension, answer questions, and tidy up loose ends. Does the ending accomplish those goals?

- a. Is the conclusion probable or believable?
 - b. Is it organic, growing out of clues previously laid out by the author (*see Question 3*)?
 - c. Or does the ending come out of the blue, feeling forced or tacked-on?
 - d. Perhaps it's too predictable.
 - e. Can you envision a different or better ending?
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8. Point to **passages** in the book—ideas, descriptions, or dialogue—that you found interesting or revealing, that somehow struck you. What, if anything, made you stop and think? Or maybe even laugh.

9. Overall, does the book **satisfy**? Does it live up to the standards of a good crime story or suspense thriller? Or does it somehow fall short?

10. Compare this book to other mystery, crime, or suspense thrillers that you've read. Consider other authors or other books in the series by the same author.