

Discussion Questions for Magpie Murders by Anthony Horowitz

"A whodunit is one of the few types of fiction that dot every i and cross every t, for all fiction is in a way a search for truth," Horowitz says. "Whodunits give you truth. The final chapter always nails it, closes it down, and you come away with a sense of satisfaction, which I don't think you get in any other sort of book."

1. Horowitz says that with this book, you're given a box of tricks and that "The motive for the murder, and therefore by extension, the identity of the killer, can be found on page 1". When were you able to see this?
2. 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? Discuss.
3. Horowitz has a talent for creating characters who although are real enough to step out of the page, are also oven incredibly unlikable. Of all the characters in *Magpie Murders*, which character did you like the least and why? Which character did you like the most and why?
4. With *Magpie Murder* we're given two mysteries to solve. The suspects in Alan Conway's murder with the same people Alan wrote about in *Magpie Murders* because they were all people in his real life. How well did you think this worked?
5. Good crime writers embed **hidden clues** in plain sight, slipping them in casually, almost in passing. Did you pick them up or were you...clueless? Once you finished the book, did you go back to locate the clues hidden in plain sight? How skillful was the author in burying them?
6. Good crime writers also tease us with **red-herrings** – false clues- to purposely lead readers astray. Did Horowitz try to throw you off the track? If so, were you tripped up? What was one of the red – herrings that tripped you up?
7. For crime fiction fans, this book is probably the ultimate red herring. Discuss. Did you come to this book with any preconceptions?
8. Talk about one of the **twists and turns** – those surprising plot developments that throw everything you think you've figured out into disarray. Did it enhance the story add complexity and build suspense?
8. There was a feeling when reading the novel that the readers themselves were being placed right in the thick of things and used as a character in their own right. Did that feeling come across to you? At what points?
9. Did the Horowitz ratchet up the **suspense**? At what point does the suspense start to build?
10. A good ending is essential in any mystery. It should ease up on tension, answer questions, and tidy up loose ends. Did the ending of *Magpie Murders* accomplish these goals?
11. Horowitz says that if he's done the job right, you won't be able to figure out who the murderers are until the very end of book. "It has to have that big smile that comes with the surprise "Oh, it was him!" or "Oh, it was her!" I should have seen that. And if you can manage that, if you pull it off, then I think you've written a successful whodunit." How do you evaluate this book, given the author's criteria for a good mystery?