

Attempted Murder of Teddy Roosevelt Discussion Questions

by Burt Solomon

Author Bio: (from Fantastic Fiction & website)

Burt Solomon is a contributing editor for *National Journal*, where he has covered the White House and many other aspects of Washington life. In 1991 he won the Gerald R. Ford Prize for Distinguished Reporting on the Presidency.

He is also the author of the acclaimed *Where They Ain't, a history of baseball in the 1890s*. He lives with his wife and children inside the Beltway of Washington, D.C.



Characters:

- **John Hay** – (63) – Secretary of State for McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt. Next in line for presidency. He tells everyone that he doesn't want to be president. Nonpracticing lawyer. Wife is Clara. 4 children – Del (deceased), Helen (poetess), Alice (who is getting married), and Clarence (attending Harvard).
- **President Theodore Roosevelt** – (43) – 26th President of the United States. Steps into the presidency when McKinley is assassinated. When an electric trolley hits the president's horse-drawn carriage in Pittsford, Massachusetts, he is thrown clear. Injures his leg in the accident. Youngest president in history (at 42). Expert in American and Naval history and in animals and the Natural World. Sure of himself, disciplined, with a boisterous personality and strong morals. Roosevelt loves drama, shows of strength, and daring people. Former New York Police Commissioner. 6 Children: Alice (18), Teddy Jr (15), Kermit, Ethel, Archie (7), Quentin (4).
- **Henry Adams** – Historian. Writing a book. Formerly taught at Harvard. Lives next door to John Hay. His grandfather and great-grandfather were US presidents.
- **Alvey Adee** – 2nd assistant Secretary of State. Hay's assistant. Has a desk at the State, War, and Navy building. Hard of hearing.
- **Nellie Bly (Mrs. Elizabeth Seaman)** – Newspaperwoman who does daring acts and writes about them. (Once checked herself into a mental facility in order to write a story about it.) Runs her husband's factory.
- **Elizabeth "Lizzie" Sherman Cameron** – Woman of "regal" bearing, a cruel streak, and is general trouble. Married to Donald Cameron, a politician and former senator from PA. Once dated Henry Adams. Lives near the Hays. Hay has an "interest" in her.
- **George Bruce Cortelyou** – President's secretary. Bureaucrat. A man of vast ambition. Minor injuries from the carriage accident.
- **Big Bill Craig** – President Roosevelt's Secret Service agent/body guard. War hero. Killed when a trolley hit the president's carriage on September 3, 1902 in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.
- **Governor Winthrop Murray Crane** – Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In carriage when the accident occurred and is thrown clear with minor injuries.

- **Frank Fortney** – Servant in Governor Crane’s house. Left-handed.
- **Emma Goldman** – Anarchist. Arrested in Omaha for a plot to murder President Roosevelt a week before the accident.
- **Franklyn Hall** – One of Roosevelt’s men.
- **Marcus Alonzo Hanna** – Senator from Ohio. (Cleveland) Believes he should be the next president. Party’s Chairman. Wall Street man. Owns stock in Northern Securities.
- **Margaret Hanna** – (30’s) – Adee’s assistant. Good with firearms. No relation to Senator Hanna.
- **Clara Hay** – John Hay’s wife. Has high empathy and low expectations of people.
- **Mr. James Hull** – Director of the Street Railway Company. Republican.
- **James** – John Hay’s butler. Black.
- **James T. Kelly** – Streetcar’s conductor.
- **Henry Cabot Lodge** – One of Roosevelt’s few friends. Senator from Massachusetts.
- **Doctor Lung** – President’s personal physician.
- **Euclid Madden** – (39) – Trolley motorman. Driver of the trolley that hit the president’s carriage. Married with 5 children.
- **Chief John Nicholson** – Pittsfield’s Chief of Police.
- **David Pratt** – Carriage driver. The Governor’s usual driver. Was thrown under the carriage horse and badly hurt during trolley accident. Has cancer. Murdered in hospital in Massachusetts.
- **William Turtle** – Madden’s lawyer and lawyer for the street car company. Member of the Massachusetts’ State Legislature. Shot in hotel in Washington D.C.
- **John Wilkie** – Secret Service Chief. (Office is in the Treasury department.) Good detective. Brilliant at rounding up counterfeiters. Protecting the president is a new task for the Secret Service.
- **Sagamore Hill** – Theodore Roosevelt’s home in Oyster Bay, NY.

Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. This story is told solely from John Hay’s point of view. Did it work? Why or why not?
3. How familiar are you with Teddy Roosevelt’s presidency? Did you know about the carriage incident before reading this book? What, if anything, did you learn?
4. Did you like the character of John Hay? Why do you think the author decided to center the story around him?

5. Who was your favorite character in the book? Why? Who was your least favorite? Why?
6. Why do you think Roosevelt has John Hay investigate the carriage accident and not a more seasoned investigator? (Especially considering that Hay was next in line for the presidency.)
7. Do you think Hay is fooling himself when he says he does not want to be president or is he being truthful? Why or why not?
8. Did the author's detailed descriptions of Washington DC in the book help set the aura of the city in the early 1900s or did the author go overboard in describing the town and buildings?
9. "Theodore has made entertaining the voters a legitimate function of the government." And, "His personality is bigger than he is. A new president for a new century." What do you think of those quotes? Do you think Theodore Roosevelt changed the way people saw the office of president?
10. Why do you think the trolley stopped for 19 minutes at the top of the hill? Was Madden responsible for what happened?
11. How did Del Hay's death affect his father? The investigation?
12. Why do you think John Hay was so interested in Lizzie, when he so loved and respected his wife, Clara? Is his interest forgivable?
13. What do you think of this portrayal of Theodore Roosevelt?
14. Did you know who was behind the assassination attempt before it was revealed?
15. John Hay is attacked multiple times while investigating the carriage accident. Do you think it was ever the intention for Hay to be hurt/killed? Why or why not?
16. Why do you think Henry Adams did what he did?
17. Why do you think Margaret Hanna did what she did?
18. Who do you think is ultimately responsible for the carriage "accident"? Madden? Pratt? Hanna? Someone else? How responsible are they?
19. What do you think of Theodore Roosevelt's decision not to prosecute for the attempted assassination? Should the perpetrator(s) be tried for their crime(s)?
20. Was the conclusion of the novel satisfying for you? Why or why not?
21. Burt Solomon has written 1 other historical fiction mystery. Will you read it?

References:

- Amazon – <https://www.amazon.com/Attempted-Murder-Teddy-Roosevelt/dp/0765392674>
- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/s/burt-solomon/>
- GoodReads – <https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/43263186-the-attempted-murder-of-teddy-roosevelt>
- Novelist – <https://web-s-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.clevnet.org/novp/detail?vid=2&sid=ed9478d1-40e7-4368-8f60-460fc2e31b01%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9bm92cC1saXZl#UI=10828398&db=neh>
- Burt Solomon's website – <http://burtsolomon.com/>

Burt Solomon's Books

Stand Alone Novels

- The Murder of Willie Lincoln (2017)
 - The Attempted Murder of Teddy Roosevelt (2019)
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If you liked The Attempted Murder of Teddy Roosevelt, try...

- Black Sun Rising – Matthew Carr
- Bless the Bride – Rhys Bowen
- Assassin of Shadows – Lawrence Goldstone
- Murder in the Lincoln White House – Colleen Gleason
- A Death of No Importance – Mariah Fredericks