

## Auntie Poldi and the Sicilian Lions Discussion Questions

by Mario Giordano (Translated by John Brownjohn)

### Author Bio: (from Fantastic Fiction & Website)

Mario Giordano, the son of Italian immigrants, is one of Germany's most versatile novelists and screenwriters. With his "Auntie Poldi" murder mysteries, he regularly ranks on the bestseller lists in Germany and the US. "*Auntie Poldi and the Sicilian Lions*," his first novel translated into English, was an IndieNext Pick, a B&N Discover Selection, an Amazon Top Ten Best Book of the Month, and a Costco Staff Pick.



Mario Giordano has written over 25 novels, children's-books, books for young adult readers and fact-books about art. Many of his books have been translated or adapted as films.

Mario Giordano writes screenplays for various German TV-shows and mini-series. Most mentionable is "*Das Experiment*". The award-winning feature-film based on his novel and screenplay was a huge success in theatres in Germany and over 14 other countries. The U.S.-Remake "*The Experiment*" starred Adrien Brody and Forest Withaker.

### Characters:

- **Auntie Poldi (Isolde Oberreiter)** – (60's) – Stylish. Former costume designer. Wears a wig. Has a bad knee. Moved to Torre Archirafe in Sicily from Germany. Wants to drink herself to death with a sea view. Likes to photograph police officers from around the world.
  - Widowed. Deceased husband, Pepe, was a tailor.
  - Has 3 sisters-in-law – Teresa, Caterina, & Luisa.
  - Her father was a Detective Chief Inspector, Georg Oberreiter.
- **Narrator** – (20's) – Unemployed, aspiring writer. Poldi is the narrator's aunt. Lives part-time in Poldi's attic and part-time in Germany. Pepe, the narrator's father's brother, was married to Poldi. Readers are never told his name.
- **Valentino Candela** – (19) – Good looking young man who helped Poldi with odd jobs. Used to also work part-time at the Palm Tree Nursery. Lived with his parents, Maria and Angelo. Disappears for 3 days. Poldi finds his body on the beach. Killed by a shotgun blast to the face.
- **Signora Cocuzza** – Sad eyed woman who runs the bakery.
- **Friedrich Hölderlin** – German poet and philosopher. Described as "the most German of Germans", Hölderlin was a key figure of German Romanticism.
- **Uncle Martino** – The narrator's uncle. Married to Teresa. Loves to drive and talk. Works in bank safes – opening and repairing them. Martino and Teresa go mushroom picking regularly.
- **Michele** – Poldi's Italian teacher. Good looking man in his 30's. Teacher and businessman.
- **Vito Montana** – (50's) – Detective Chief Inspector for the State Police. In charge of Valentino's murder investigation. Divorced. Has 2 children.
- **Mimi (Domenico) Pastore de Belfiore** – Valerie's uncle. Owns estate near Femminatmorta. Married to Carmela. No kids. He is writing a book on Hölderlin.

- **Corrado Patane** – Building contractor. Knows Russo. Looks like a stereotypical Mafiosi.
- **Valerie Raisi de Belfiore** – (20's) – Beautiful young lady. Inherited Femminatmorta estate from her father. Lived in France until she moved to the estate in Sicily.
- **Italo Russo** – Owns the Russo Palm Tree Nursery next to Femminatmorta. Said to be part of the mafia, Cosa Nostra.
- **Dr Frank Tannenger** – (Mr. X) – Red headed American. Lives in Munich. Member of the Bayerische Staatskanzlei, a department in the Bavarian State government. Heads up the EU relations department. Was in a relationship with Valentino.
- **Femminamorta** – Estate next to the Russo Nursery. Valerie Raisi de Belfiore lives there. Flower filled estate with gardens. One of a pair of lion statues at entrance of estate is missing.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. This book was originally written in German and then translated into English. Could you tell? Did that change your feelings about the book?
3. This book is told from the perspective of the narrator, Poldi's nephew, an aspiring writer. What did you think of this technique? Why do you think that the author framed the story this way? Since the story was told by the narrator, who was relating what Poldi had told him, do you think we got the "real story" about what happened?
4. Each chapter of the book starts with a summary of what is going to happen in that chapter. Did you like that narrative device? Did it help your reading of the book or hinder it?
5. What did you think of the main character, Poldi? Did you think Poldi was a realistically colorful character or did she tip over into parody for you?
6. Poldi is sexy and sassy, with a vibrant romantic life -- characteristics we often see in younger protagonists, but not in older ones. Why do you think vibrant, sexy women of a certain age aren't featured more frequently in movies and books? In what other ways does Poldi break with convention?
7. Poldi, born in Germany, immigrates to Sicily. How does Poldi's immigrant status and new world experiences help the reader understand the story?
8. The author evokes a very strong sense of place. What were you drawn to most – the descriptions of the food, of the landscape, the building, or the history of Sicily? Do you want to visit Sicily more or less after reading this book?
9. Poldi is immediately accepted by her neighbors, in spite of her quirks. But while she is an insider in many ways, she is also still an outsider as an expatriate. How does she reconcile this contradiction? Have you ever felt like an insider and an outsider at the same time? How did you reconcile that?
10. Why do Valérie and Poldi hit it off immediately? What do they see in each other that leads to their strong friendship?

11. Why do you think Poldi choose policemen to photograph? What does it say about her thoughts surrounding authority?
12. Do you have a friend or relative who reminds you of Poldi? What is your relationship with him or her and how does your dynamic relate to the dynamic between Poldi and her nephew?
13. If you could choose any place to retire, as Poldi chose Sicily, where would you go and why?
14. Poldi has a close but complicated relationship with each one of her sisters. At times, they can be a burden to her, but often they become her partners in crime. What are your relationships like with your siblings and how do you navigate and maintain those relationships as you grow older?
15. Why does Poldi feel so honor-bound to Valentino? What other motivations could she have to solve the murder?
16. The central story of this book surrounded the murder of Valentino. Were you able to predict who the murderer was? Did you suspect anybody else at other times?
17. There were a number of small mysteries (i.e. the missing stone lions, the mosaic tiles, etc.) surrounding the larger murder mystery. Did those smaller mysteries help or harm the story? Why do you think that?
18. Giordano has written other books in this series. Will you read them?

### References:

- Book Browse – [https://www.bookbrowse.com/mag/btb/index.cfm/book\\_number/3471/auntie-poldi-and-the-sicilian-lions#btb](https://www.bookbrowse.com/mag/btb/index.cfm/book_number/3471/auntie-poldi-and-the-sicilian-lions#btb)
- Eckhart Public Library – <https://epl.lib.in.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/RD-Auntie-Poldi.pdf>
- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/g/mario-giordano/>
- Mario Giordano website – <https://www.mariogiordano.de/english/>
- Reading Group Guides – <https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/auntie-poldi-and-the-sicilian-lions/guide>
- Wikipedia – [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich\\_H%C3%B6lderlin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_H%C3%B6lderlin)

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## Mario Giordano Books

### Series:

#### Apocalypse

1. Apocalypse - Season 1 (2013)
2. Apocalypse - Season 2 (2014)
3. Apocalypse - Season 3 (2015)

#### Cotton FBI

- The Beginning (2014)
- Cotton FBI Collection (2015) (with Jan Gardemann, Alexander Lohmann and Peter Mennigen)

## Auntie Poldi

1. Auntie Poldi and the Sicilian Lions (2016)
2. Auntie Poldi and the Fruits of the Lord (2018)
  - *aka: Auntie Poldi and the Vineyards of Etna*
3. Auntie Poldi and the Handsome Antonio (2020)
4. Auntie Poldi and the Lost Madonna (2021)

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### If you liked Auntie Poldi and the Sicilian Lions, try...

- Three Things About Elsie – Joanna Cannon
  - Villa Triste – Lucretia Grindle
  - The Thursday Murder Club – Richard Osman
  - An Elderly Lady is Up to No Good – Helene Tursten
  - The Body in the Piazza – Katherine Hall Page
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