

## Death at Greenway Discussion Questions

by Lori Rader-Day

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

Lori Rader-Day is an Agatha, Anthony, and Mary Higgins Clark award-winning author. She lives in Chicago, where she is co-chair of the mystery readers' festival Midwest Mystery Conference (aka Murder and Mayhem in Chicago) and served as 2019-2020 national president of Sisters in Crime.



She teaches creative writing for Northwestern University's School of Professional Studies.

### Characters:

- **Bridget “Bridey” Kelly** – Probationary nurse. Sent to accompany 10 children to the English countryside during the Blitz. Her mother and siblings were killed by a bomb during a raid.
- **Joan Arbuthnot** – Organized the evacuation of 10 children from London to Greenway. Married to Malcolm. 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage. No nonsense personality. Raised 5 kids of her own.
- **Malcolm Arbuthnot** – Pompous. Married to Joan. 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage. Went with his wife and the evacuated children into the countryside. 2 grown children from his first marriage.
- **Mrs. Bastin** – Lives in Ferry Cottage. Works at Greenway. Husband is a laborer. Found the body in the river.
- **Agatha M.C. Christie Mallowan** – Famous mystery crime writer. Owned Greenway at the beginning of World War II. Is known as “Mrs. M” to the people around Greenway. Max, 35, was her second husband. Daughter is Rosalind.
- **Willa Crossland** – One of Gigi’s friends from London and the train. Part of English Intelligence.
- **Doreen** – One of the children sent to Greenway.
- **Edith** – The maid at Greenway.
- **Edward** – Child evacuated to Greenway. Almost drowns. Sister is Maureen.
- **Gigi** – Nurse. Posh. Says her name is also Bridget Kelly. Sent to accompany children to countryside.
- **Alice Hanniford** – Wife of Greenway’s gardener, George.
- **Oliver Hart** – Doctor for the villages near Greenway.
- **Henry “Jenks” Kenworthy-Jenkins** – Observer for the Intelligence Unit. Comes from a high station/nobility. Meets Bridey on the train.
- **Tommy Kent** – Soldier that Bridget was seeing before she moved to Greenway and he was sent to the front.
- **Llewelyn Nevins** – Former soldier home because of an injury. (Met on train.)

- **Lydell Michael Smith** – Farmer. Poacher at Greenway. His son was killed in the war. Sliced his hand open and was treated by Dr Hart and Bridey.
- **Pamela** – Child evacuated to Greenway.
- **Cecilia “Cissy” Poole** – Lives in London. Son is Samuel. Was going to send her son to the countryside with Mrs. Arbuthnot, but chose not to at the last minute.
- **Scaldwell** – Greenway’s butler.
- **Vera Scaldwell** – Greenway’s cook. Married to Scaldwell. One grown daughter, Diana.
- **WRN (Wren)** – Women's Royal Naval Service

### Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. This is the author’s first historic fiction/mystery story. Could you tell? Should she write more? Why or why not?
3. The majority of the story is told from Bridey’s point of view, with small interjections from other characters. Did this story telling device work? Why or why not?
4. What did you think about the pacing of this story?
5. Even though the story takes place in Agatha Christie’s manor house (Greenway) and her presence is noted, she is only a background character in the book. Why do you think the author chose to set the book at Greenway when Christie is not an integral character? Did you find yourself wanting to hear more from Agatha? Why or why not?
6. Greenway is a beautiful, gentle holiday home and a playground for the children, but also a site of war and conflict. Discuss the estate through its contradictions as a place of leisure and retreat and also of battle.
7. **Death at Greenway** uses historical detail researched by the author but also threads fictional story throughout. Are you more interested in the story, knowing it is based somewhat on history? Did you read the Author’s Note before or after the novel itself? Why did you make that choice?
8. The author did a lot of research into the names of the people who actually lived around and at Greenway during World War 2. Do you think that accurate names and other information is important to the story? Why or why not?
9. Bridget Kelly says early on in the book that she “doesn’t have the Blitz spirit.” How does this manifest itself for her? Can you relate, given recent real worldwide events? What kind of Blitz survivor might you have been?
10. At Greenway, Gigi is taken with the idea of staying in Agatha Christie’s home but Bridey isn’t moved. Beyond the fact that she can’t allow herself to feel much at all, why might the two young women have differing reactions to this turn of events? How would you feel to find out you were staying in the Queen of Crime’s house?

11. **Death at Greenway's** mystery revolves and resolves around issues of identity. As Mr. Scaldwell opines at one point: "Times like this, things went slippery." What do the multiple habitants of Greenway think of identity and who one might become during slippery times? How does Bridey use this to her own advantage - and why?
12. When did you know that Gigi wasn't who she said she was? What tipped you off?
13. Does Bridey love Tom? What makes you say that?
14. When Gigi first goes missing, did you think it was something nefarious or did you think she had run off? Why?
15. What do you think about the people of the manor being turned out and it becoming housing for soldiers? Necessary? Unacceptable? Why?
16. Did you know who the killer was before it was revealed? What clues were given?
17. There is a passage where 6-year-old Doreen (one of the evacuees) goes home to London, but doesn't recognize her old home or her parents because she has been away at Greenway so long. How did that passage make you feel?
18. What do you think about what Bridey did when identifying Gigi's body? Did you know she had done it? Was she wrong or right? Why?
19. Were you surprised by what happened to Mrs. Poole?
20. The story ends in 1975 with the death of Agatha Christie Mallowan. How did you feel about the drawn-out way the story ended? Why did you feel that way?
21. Lori Rader-Day has written other books. Will you read any of them?

#### References:

- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/r/lori-rader-day/>
- GoodReads – <https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/54798448>
- Lori Rader Day website – <https://loriraderday.com/>
- Nerd Daily – <https://thenerdaily.com/lori-rader-day-author-interview/>
- Novelist – <https://web-s-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.clevnet.org/novp/detail?vid=2&sid=206d891d-903b-4e89-87ca-0266e987eb52%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9bm92cC1saXZl#UI=11007053&db=neh>

## Lori Rader-Day's Books

### Stand-Alone Novels

- The Black Hour (2014)
- Little Pretty Things (2015)
- The Day I Died (2016)
- Under a Dark Sky (2018)
- The Lucky One (2020)
- Death at Greenway (2021)
- The Death of Us (2023)

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### If you liked Death at Greenway, try...

- The Mitford Murders – Jessica Fellowes
- The Stranger – Kate Riordan
- Snow – John Banville
- A Forgotten Place – Charles Todd
- Death of a Dishonorable Gentleman – Tessa Arlen

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## The evacuation of children during the Second World War

(<https://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/articles/the-evacuation-of-children-during-the-second-world-war/>)

England evacuated civilians from cities and other areas that were at high risk of being bombed or becoming a battlefield in the event of an invasion.

Evacuees themselves were split into four categories, focused on specific social groups deemed non-essential to war work: 1) school-age children; 2) the infirm; 3) pregnant women and 4) mothers with babies or pre-school children (who would be evacuated together).

On the morning of 31 August 1939 (three days before war broke out), an evacuation order was given for the next day. Children began frantically assembling in their schools early on the morning of 1 September and Operation Pied Piper began in earnest.

Over the course of the first three days of official evacuation 1.5 million people were moved. In England alone 673,000 unaccompanied schoolchildren, 406,000 mothers and young children and 3,000 expectant mothers were relocated. Separated from their parents, and, sometimes, siblings, schoolchildren were instead accompanied on their journey by a small army of guardians, mostly teachers and WVS personnel.