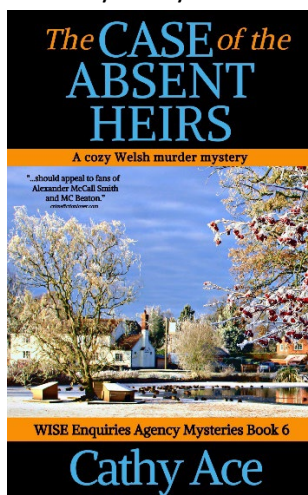


BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

The Case of the Absent Heirs

by Cathy Ace



GENERAL:

- 1) In this book you met the four women who staff the WISE Enquiries Agency. With whom did you most readily identify, and why? Do you think the women have a good group skill-set for their chosen occupation? What about their “additional member”?
- 2) These women are at different stages in their lives and come from very different backgrounds. They also have differing family responsibilities and relationships. Do you think that women have to juggle family, life, and a career in a way that differs from men? Why/why not?
- 3) Are any members of your group Welsh, Irish, Scottish or English? Any ancestry from those areas? Each woman has a different sense of her own “national” identity – do you? What influences that for you? Do you think that differs between men and women, or does age and background play a more vital role? (How about having a meeting with distinctly Welsh, Irish, Scottish or English food and drink?)
- 4) There’s an interplay in these books between old traditions and new technology. By their nature traditions tend to remain the same, whereas technology brings new challenges. How do you find that new technology has changed your own life? What traditions do you adhere to?
- 5) The class structure in Britain is quite unique to that world. If you’re a British group, how do you think that affects your lives, if at all? If you’re not a British group, what takes its place?

6) These women all display some measure of strength, and some measure of vulnerability or weakness in the books. What were the most noticeable to you?

7) If you were to cast actors (dead or alive) to play these roles, who would you choose, and why?

Questions specifically relating to “The Case of the Absent Heirs”

- 1) “If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is!” These are words Stephanie’s father should have heeded when considering the business deal put to him by his newly-acquired friends...but, like so many, he didn’t. These days we hear of various sorts of scams all the time; often they target the vulnerable. What do you do, or what can you do, in your community to get word out about the “deals” people should be avoiding? Have you got any stories about propositions put to you that really were “too good to be true”?
- 2) This book is set across the Christmas period, which is certainly a time of year when traditions abound. Even if you’re not reading and discussing this book during the season within which it’s set, reflect upon the way the advent and Christmas period are celebrated, as well as the new year, in your community. Maybe there are large numbers of people – some within your club – who are not Christian and mark other religious or cultural events during this period...what are those traditions? How are various traditions intertwined in your community? Althea has her mind made up about old traditions being important – what about things you used to do as a child that have fallen out of favor...or which were traditions from another part of the world, where you maybe no longer live?
- 3) Beyond the specifics of traditions – what role do you think any and all traditional activities play in society? What’s their role? Do you think that’s changed over the years? For better...or worse?
- 4) Inheritance is always a tricky subject, not least because it implies the death of the person who will be bequeathing it. How have you found things have changed in terms of this sort of knotty issue through your lifetime? How have you approached the issue within your own family, or community? Is it healthy to discuss how an estate will be divided before it needs to be done? (Have you got a fiendish plan for when you’ve gone, designed to shock those left behind?)
- 5) How do you think avarice ranks in terms of “The Seven Deadly Sins”? Have you ever known anyone who is truly avaricious? How did that impact their life – and the lives of those around them? Is there a time when avarice is a “good thing”?

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Thank you for choosing to read this book!