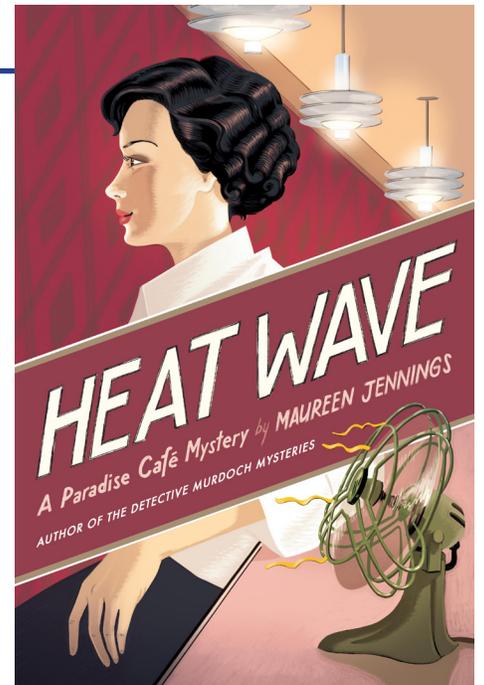


READER'S GUIDE

Heat Wave by Maureen Jennings

INTRODUCING *Heat Wave*

It's July 1936 and Toronto is under a record-breaking heat wave. Charlotte Frayne is the junior associate in a two-person private investigation firm, owned by T. Gilmore. Two events set the book's plot in motion: an anti-Semitic hate letter is delivered to Gilmore, who up to now has not acknowledged his religion, and Hilliard Taylor, a veteran of the First World War requests the firm's assistance in uncovering what he believes is systematic embezzlement of the Paradise Café, which he owns and operates with three other men, all of whom were prisoners of war. The two events, although seemingly completely unrelated, come together in this wonderful novel that brings to life characters who are as real to the reader as those of the Detective Murdoch series.



IMPORTANT THEMES

Anti-Semitism – Mr. Gilmore and Charlotte receive threatening letters motivated by anti-Semitism. Mr. Gilmore goes as far to change his and his wife's names to protect themselves and to improve their business prospects. He discusses his parents who, out of fear, gave up practicing their religion as well. Anti-Semitism is witnessed first-hand by Charlotte as she investigates the murder of Ida Gilmore and sees the anti-Semitic rhetoric increase in the years leading up to WWII, including the mention of Swastika Clubs and the Christie Pits riot.

Feminism – Charlotte is operating in a male-dominated field. She is often underestimated by the men around her, and frequently inconvenienced by assumptions made on the base of her gender. She is able to use this to her advantage and is able to convince people to reveal things to her they might not otherwise because they underestimate her. Ida, meanwhile, gains a small following of women in her neighbourhood who support her outspoken views on women's rights, while also incurring the ire of their husbands.

Mental health / PTSD – Conal is described by Charlotte as “mentally fragile”. The experiences of the four men in the POW camp reveal the horrible treatment they received and the horrors of war. Several other characters including a drunk and Jack Murdoch are also shown to be veterans of the war. These characters paint a picture of the various ways in which war affects soldiers.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Charlotte is a woman in what is traditionally a man's field. What challenges does she face? Does her femininity give her any advantages?
2. Discuss the ways in which PTSD is depicted in the novel and how the time period informs how it is treated.
3. Charlotte meets many people over the course of the novel. Does she interact with women differently than she does men? If so in what ways?
4. Communism is a major element in the novel. Do all of the characters support these ideas? In what ways do the characters demonstrate their opinions?
5. Mr. Gilmore gets into trouble as a result of keeping secrets. In what ways could he have handled things differently, and would they have improved his situation?
6. Detectives Murdoch and Arcady are both working on Ida Gilmore's case. How do their approaches vary? What does Charlotte's relationship with the two tell you?
7. Is Charlotte remiss in not informing her grandfather about Bertha? What does this tell you about her character?



ABOUT MAUREEN

Maureen Jennings immigrated to Canada from the UK as a teenager. She is the author of the Detective Murdoch series which has been adapted into the TV series *Murdoch Mysteries*. The series is going into its thirteenth season. Before becoming a full time writer, Maureen was a psychotherapist. She currently lives in Toronto with her husband Iden Ford and their dog, Murdoch.