

# READERS' GUIDE

## *November Rain* by Maureen Jennings

### INTRODUCING *November Rain*

Charlotte's boss at T. Gilmore and Associates takes off on a mysterious trip to Europe, leaving Charlotte in charge of the detective agency. Mrs. Jessop hires the newly promoted Private Investigator to inquire into the untimely death of her son, a veteran injured in the Great War. The police ruled it a suicide, but Mrs. Jessop doesn't agree and wants Charlotte to find out what really happened.

Then Charlotte is hired to infiltrate a small women's wear manufacturer to uncover communist agitators. When the factory supervisor is murdered on the job just as Charlotte starts to look into it, she gets seconded to the police to help find out what happened.

The November clouds darken and Charlotte is left to struggle to solve two mysteries at the same time — until they intersect. Add an aging grandfather, an absent boyfriend, and a mad scheme to mount a controversial play at the Paradise Café and Charlotte has her hands full.



### IMPORTANT THEMES

*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 basis 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.

*Social class* – The Jessops and the Rosenthals are very wealthy families and their juxtaposition with the factory workers at Superior Ladies' Clothes and the veterans that frequent the Paradise Café creates an intriguing snapshot of the social classes of the 1930s.

*World War I* – There are quite a few WWI veterans at the heart of this story. Each of them has been affected by the war in different ways – physically, mentally, and emotionally. The toll it had taken on these men is especially evident as the Paradise Café series begins to lead up to WWII.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the working conditions at Superior Ladies' Clothes. Are they average for the time period? What might conditions be like today?
2. Compare the lives of the Jessop women to the lives of the working-class women.
3. What do you think of the Blue Benches introduced by the City of Toronto? (Chapter 10)
4. Gerald Jessop had told his wife that he started going to the Paradise Café because "they understood" (Chapter 15). What do you think he meant by that?
5. What do you think of Gerald Jessop leaving his estate to Thomas Masefield?
6. Why would Jack Murdoch attend Wilf's play?
7. Discuss the author's use of setting. Why would she choose to set *November Rain* in 1936?
8. Has support for veterans changed since World War I? How so? Are there any improvements that could still be made?



### ABOUT MAUREEN

Maureen Jennings was born in the UK and now lives in Toronto. Best known for the Detective Murdoch books, which have been adapted into the long-running television series, *Murdoch Mysteries*, she is also the author of the Tom Tyler and Christine Morris books. Jennings was awarded a Certificate of Commendation from Heritage Toronto in 1998 and the Grant Allen award for on-going contribution to the genre in 2011. She has received a total of eight nominations from the Crime Writers of Canada, for best novel and best short story of the year. Jennings lives in Toronto with her husband, photographer Iden Ford, and her dog, Murdoch.