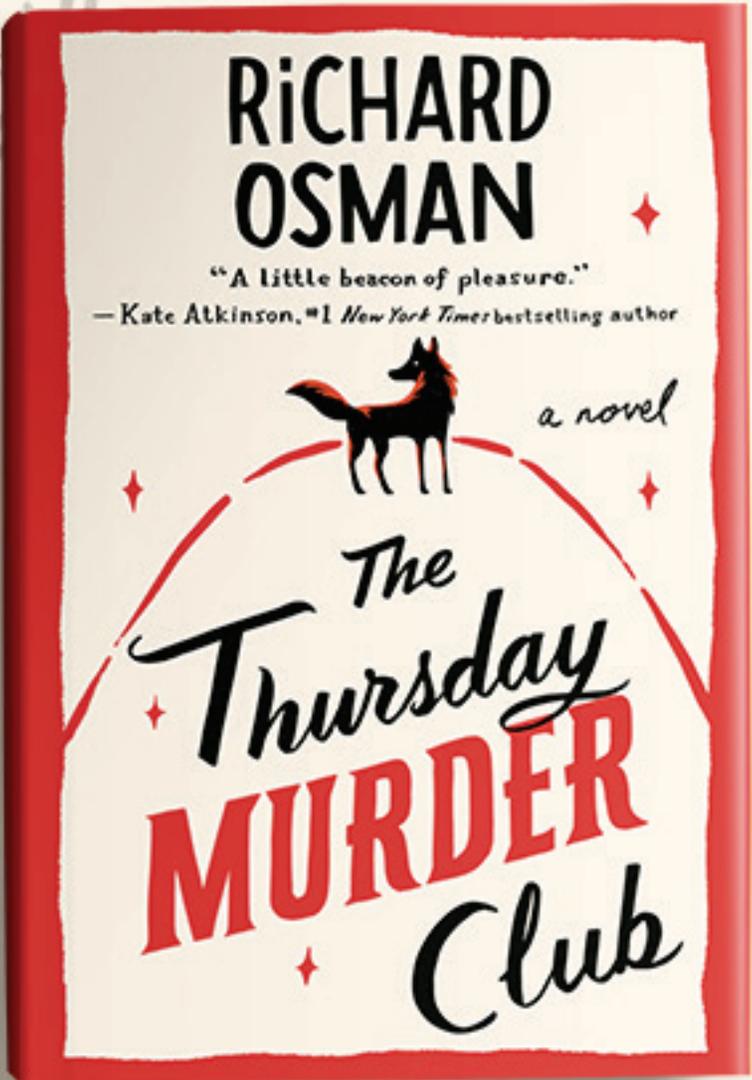




CASE FILE



Case Notes: The Thursday Murder Club
Richard Osman





Hello America!

I am writing to you from England, home of Agatha Christie, Hugh Grant, and books about being murdered in quaint country villages.

Welcome to 'The Thursday Murder Club,' a group of very unlikely friends in their mid 70s. There is Joyce, a quiet but formidable former nurse; Ron, a retired Labor activist, still on the look out for trouble; Ibrahim, a psychiatrist and peacemaker, and Elizabeth, a . . . well no one is quite sure what Elizabeth used to do, but she seems to have contacts in very high places.

Once a week our four unlikely friends, all residents in a luxury retirement community, meet up to investigate old unsolved police cases—usually accompanied by friendly arguments and many bottles of wine.

One day the peace of their community is shattered by a real-life killing, and 'The Thursday Murder Club' decide they are just the people to solve the case.

I hope you will find the book witty and warm, though I should warn you that you may also cry from time to time. And I wonder if you will have any luck in solving the mystery yourself?

A book with four heroes in their seventies has been a joy to write, and I would love to know what you make of them and their methods. This brilliant and unorthodox gang are overlooked and underestimated at every turn. Can they catch our killer before it's too late? No spoilers, but it would be a weird mystery book if they didn't.

I really hope you take this very British book to your heart, and as soon as they trust anyone from either of our countries to board a plane again, I look forward to flying over and seeing you all soon!

Your English pal,

Richard Osman



Discussion Questions

1. Though the book follows the four friends—Joyce, Elizabeth, Ibrahim, and Ron—solving the murder, the only first-person POV is Joyce’s via her diary. Why do you think the author chose to show her perspective in such a way?
2. Joyce was a nurse, Elizabeth was in the secret service, Ibrahim was a psychiatrist, and Ron was a trade union leader. Who do you think was most helpful in solving the crime? What strengths did they each bring to the table? What were their weaknesses?
3. Do you think that PC Donna De Freitas and DCI Chris Hudson make a good team? Do you think Donna was smart to stay in touch with Joyce, even though it was unprofessional at times? Why or why not? What do you make of the relationship between the detectives and the septuagenarians?
4. Joyce says, “I am very happy to be overlooked, and always have been. And I do think perhaps that will be helpful in this investigation.” Do you agree? What insights and advantages does she gain by not calling attention to herself, and staying under the radar?
5. Society often writes off the abilities of the elderly—assuming both body and mind are deteriorating. At the heart of *The Thursday Murder Club* is a lesson to never to underestimate this population. Who misjudges the residents of Cooper’s Chase the most? What are the consequences of underestimating the four friends?
6. One of the recurring themes is the gray area between the law and each character’s moral code. Do you think Penny’s husband, John, did the right thing? How about Penny?
7. At any point, did you have an idea of who might have committed the murder? Who did you suspect, and why? Were you correct?
8. Joyce is always baking, and the others are always eating. The next question is simple: What is the best cake?
9. If you had to solve a murder, which three people—could be friends, family, celebrities—would you choose to help you solve it?

A Conversation with author

RICHARD OSMAN



How did this novel come to be?

I have a good friend whose mum lives in a retirement village, and we went to visit her for lunch one day. This place was so beautiful and so serene. Rolling green hills, woods, lakes, wildlife everywhere—even the llamas, who make a cameo appearance in the book. It was so calm and peaceful, miles from anywhere, no mobile phone reception, just heaven. I'm not sure what it says about me, but, as I sat there, drinking a G&T in the sunshine, my first thought was "Well this would be a perfect place for a murder."

A little later we were having lunch in the restaurant, and I found myself surrounded by this incredible group of people; almost all over 70, almost all laughing and joking with friends, and almost all with a drink in their hand. I chatted to a few people, heard a few stories, and realized the extraordinary range of skills on display. And then I had the thought, "well if there was a murder here, you can be pretty sure that this lot would solve it."

Just like that. The perfect place for a murder. The perfect people to solve it. I started writing the next day.

To what extent did it differ from your original conception?

That's a good question. I think as soon as I had this idyllic setting, and this team of detectives in their seventies, I thought, "Well this is a cozy setting, but I really, really don't want to write a cozy book." A book where the wily underdogs take on the bad guys, and everything gets wrapped up nicely in time for a lovely cup of tea.

So instead I really set about throwing as much trouble as I could at my gang of senior citizens. Forget the fact that they're older, just keep confronting them with the raw reality of the outside world, and let them meet it on their own terms. That's when the whole thing really came to life.

What appealed to you about having your amateur sleuths be elderly?

Having four characters in their seventies was an absolute joy from the very start. The idea that we underestimate older people is the key to *The Thursday Murder Club*. The absolute joy of writing it, was that my four detectives might look gentle and harmless on the outside, but they are far from that on the inside.

A Conversation with
author *Richard Osman*

And, as people will read in the book, all four of them are overlooked and underestimated throughout—by suspects, by cops, by everyone. They use this to their advantage in a number of ingenious ways.

They also have a lifetime of experience to draw on, so their former jobs were very useful in this respect. Elizabeth used to be a spy, so there is nothing she hasn't seen, no trick anyone can pull which will get past her. She is utterly ruthless. Joyce used to be a nurse, so she has spent her life around death, and pain, and grief. Ron is a former labor activist, and he will argue about anything with anyone, and will never back down. And Ibrahim is a psychiatrist, a thinker, an organizer, and the type of man who will always spot things that others might miss.

They are not self-conscious, they are not frightened by death, and, they are not frightened about the consequences of their actions.

Why set it in Kent?

It is set in Kent simply because that's not where the real retirement village is. Some of the residents of the real village were worried that the book might be a hit, and then they would have to deal with coachloads of tourists. Disturbing all that beautiful peace. So I promised I would set it somewhere else.

The truth is, they would love it if tourists came to visit. I guarantee it. They'd be selling T-shirts and refreshments. You wait. If the book takes off, they'll have a sign put up within a month. "You Are Now Entering Thursday Murder Club Country." They'll be charging for entry.

Your editor was quoted as saying "Richard captures an essence of Britishness, in the same way that Agatha Christie did in her day." What do you consider that "essence"?

The three rules every British person is told at school are 1) Never send a meal back in a restaurant, just let it quietly ruin your evening instead; 2) Apologise if someone bumps into you; and 3) Mumble like Hugh Grant if you ever receive a compliment.

But really, we are a country that operates on good humor, on not taking ourselves too seriously, and of simultaneously being deeply embarrassed but incredibly proud of being British. We're creative, tolerant, and shy, awkward and loyal. And we have a cute accent. That was all true in Agatha Christie's day, and it is still is now.

Is that essence reflected in the quiz shows you've worked on?

Oh absolutely. We take the quizzing seriously, but we don't take ourselves seriously. And we're not too obsessed with winning. The biggest show I'm known for in the UK, *Pointless* has a jackpot of only £1000, and yet it gets higher ratings than *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*. That's Britain for you.

You've been quoted as stating, "I've always known how hard it is to write a crime novel and I have such respect for people who do it." Was it harder than you expected? In what way?

Writing any novel is incredibly hard. It's been far and away my proudest creative achievement. The crime-writing community is an incredibly supportive one, and that makes the process easier. And the US crime-writing community seems equally supportive. Since writing the book I've had such lovely chats

A Conversation with
author **Richard Osman**

with people like Harlan Coben and Shari Lapena. Everybody genuinely seems to wish each other well. Does that happen in other genres too? Does Margaret Atwood ring up Salman Rushdie and say 'cool novel bro!' Actually, Margaret Atwood probably does, she seems lovely.

In what way has your work on quiz shows influenced your writing fiction?

I have not thought about this before, but it's a very interesting one. In television formats you have to grab people's attention, and you have to keep it. They could switch over at any second. People will read maybe 30 pages of a new book before making their mind up. They'll probably watch about 30 seconds of a new TV show, before switching over to *Grey's Anatomy* reruns.

So in a TV quiz, you grab people quickly, you explain the rules quickly, you give viewers a reason to stay to the end (Who's going to win??? How much???), and then you give them a host and contestants who they want to spend a bit of time with.

I suppose that's naturally how I went about writing: grab them, then entertain them, and then give the answer they were looking for. I worry that if I started describing the color of the sky for a page and a half, people would simply put the book down and watch *Judge Judy* instead. And I wouldn't blame them.

Your Grandfather was a police officer; to what extent did that shape your interest in writing a mystery series?

Well my grandfather will always be my hero. He was a hard man, who did a hard job. But he was much more than that. I grew up without a father and my grandfather was around a lot. If I think about what it means to be a man, I would think of my grandfather. He was very tough, but very gentle, kind, loving and thoughtful. He was very secure in who he was. Those are all the things I would like to be as a man. There is a lot of him in Ron.

As he was my hero, I always wanted to be a cop. That would be my dream job. But I'm visually impaired, and it was impossible. So writing crime fiction is a little nod to my hero. A little thank you. I would give anything to have him read it.

What was your approach to integrating humour into a whodunit plot?

I love that *The Thursday Murder Club* is making people laugh so much. But there is not a single 'joke' in the whole book. Anything that is funny comes from the characters, and the unusual, but real, situations they find themselves in.

I think jokes can take you outside the story, especially in a crime book, but I hope the laughter in this book comes from truth and recognition. And those sort of laughs strengthen a story.

That's my theory at least. If anyone finds an actual joke then I apologise.

Will there be a US version of *Pointless*?

I think it might need a \$1M jackpot if there is.

Take a quiz
written by the
quiz master
himself!

Who Wants to Read a Millionaire?

25 books, all the which have sold over 25 million copies worldwide. Some of the most famous books of all time, though there are a few surprises in there, too.

Richard has given you the initials of the title, the initials of the author, and the year in which each was first published. It's one of those quizzes designed to take your time with. So make yourself a cup of coffee (or something stronger, we won't judge), get your friends to help, and see how many can you score! No one will get all 25!

- 1 TDVC by DB (2003)
- 2 PAP by JA (1813)
- 3 ATTWN by AC (1939)
- 4 TCITR by JDS (1951)
- 5 TNOTR by UE (1980)
- 6 GG by GF (2012)
- 7 TTOPR by BP (1902)
- 8 WAP by LT (1869)
- 9 TKR by KH (2003)
- 10 TGG by FSF (1925)
- 11 GWTW by MM (1936)
- 12 J by PB (1974)
- 13 TVHC by EC (1969)
- 14 TGWTDT by SL (2005)
- 15 THG by SC (2008)
- 16 TG by MP (1969)
- 17 TGOTT by PH (2015)
- 18 R by DDM (1938)
- 19 AOHF by MT (1885)
- 20 VOTD by JS (1966)
- 21 WTWTA by MS (1963)
- 22 TTB by CM (1977)
- 23 D by FH (1965)
- 24 FOF by EJ (1973)
- 25 TSDOAMATATQ by ST (1982)

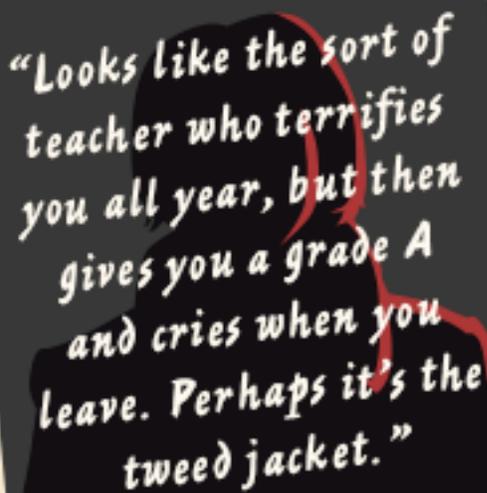
Answers on
the next page

Who Wants to Read a Millionaire?

Answers

- 1 *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown
- 2 *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen
- 3 *And Then There Were None*, Agatha Christie
- 4 *The Catcher in the Rye*, JD Salinger
- 5 *The Name of the Rose*, Umberto Eco
- 6 *Gone Girl*, Gillian Flynn
- 7 *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Beatrix Potter
- 8 *War and Peace*, Leo Tolstoy
- 9 *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini
- 10 *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald
- 11 *Gone with the Wind*, Margaret Mitchell
- 12 *Jaws*, Peter Benchley
- 13 *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, Eric Carle
- 14 *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, Stieg Larsson
- 15 *The Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins
- 16 *The Godfather*, Mario Puzo
- 17 *The Girl on the Train*, Paula Hawkins
- 18 *Rebecca*, Daphne du Maurier
- 19 *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain
- 20 *Valley of the Dolls*, Jacqueline Susann
- 21 *Where the Wild Things Are*, Maurice Sendak
- 22 *The Thorn Birds*, Colleen McCullough
- 23 *Dune*, Frank Herbert
- 24 *Fear of Flying*, Erica Jong
- 25 *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13¾*, Sue Townsend

Meet the Thursday Murder Club

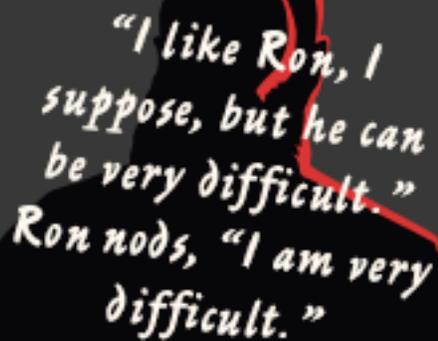


"Looks like the sort of teacher who terrifies you all year, but then gives you a grade A and cries when you leave. Perhaps it's the tweed jacket."

ELIZABETH

- Founded the Thursday Murder Club in the Cooper Chase Retirement Village's "Jigsaw Room" (usually used for solving puzzles, not murders)
- Not supposed to say what she did for a living, but murders and investigations wouldn't be unfamiliar work for her . . .
- Collects all of the unsolved case files for the Club (by pulling some strings with former colleagues)
- Very well dressed

- Retired and famous trade union leader, known as Red Ron
- A veteran of picket lines, blacklists, police cells, bust-ups, sit-ins, and walkouts.
- Key strength: "He never believes a single word anyone tells him."
- Very large man and heavily tattooed (including a West Ham United tattoo on his neck)



"I like Ron, I suppose, but he can be very difficult." Ron nods, "I am very difficult."

RON

Meet the Thursday Murder Club

"She is sitting very happily, taking it all in. Like a quiet bird, constantly on the lookout for something sparkling in the sunshine."

JOYCE

- Retired psychiatrist, all about the logistics and details
- Always dressed in his best—a three-piece suit, with a handkerchief artfully folded in his breast pocket—and smells wonderful
- Enjoys pilates, and swims everyday

- Retired nurse
- An excellent baker (the Murder Club frequently enjoys her baked delights)
- The type who "gets things done," is very organized and observant
- Keeps a diary every day, through which we get an intimate look at Club activities

"Zumba is before Pilates," says Ibrahim. "I don't like to do both. It's counter-intuitive to your major muscle groups." He is currently polishing an already-polished cufflink.

IBRAHIM



Baking with Joyce

Joyce always makes sure the Thursday Murder Club has something sweet to snack on—and your book club can too with Joyce's famous Lemon Drizzle Cake!

Ingredients

For the Cake

4 ounces softened butter
(make sure it's really soft)
6 ounces self-rising flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
6 ounces superfine sugar
2 large eggs
6 tablespoons milk
1 large lemon
(unwaxed, finely grated rind of)

For the Icing

1 large lemon (juice of)
4 ounces superfine sugar

Method

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. I use an oblong tin which measures 9" x 8", lined with baking parchment; could also be made in a round tin, but size of which, I'm not sure!!
3. Tip all cake ingredients into large mixing bowl and beat for 2-3 minutes; mixture will drop easily off spoon. Spoon mixture into tin and smooth with back of spoon.
4. Bake for 30-40 minutes until golden and firm to the touch.
5. Beat together icing ingredients and pour over the cake while it is still HOT.
6. Cool in tin and cut into squares. YUM YUM!!!!

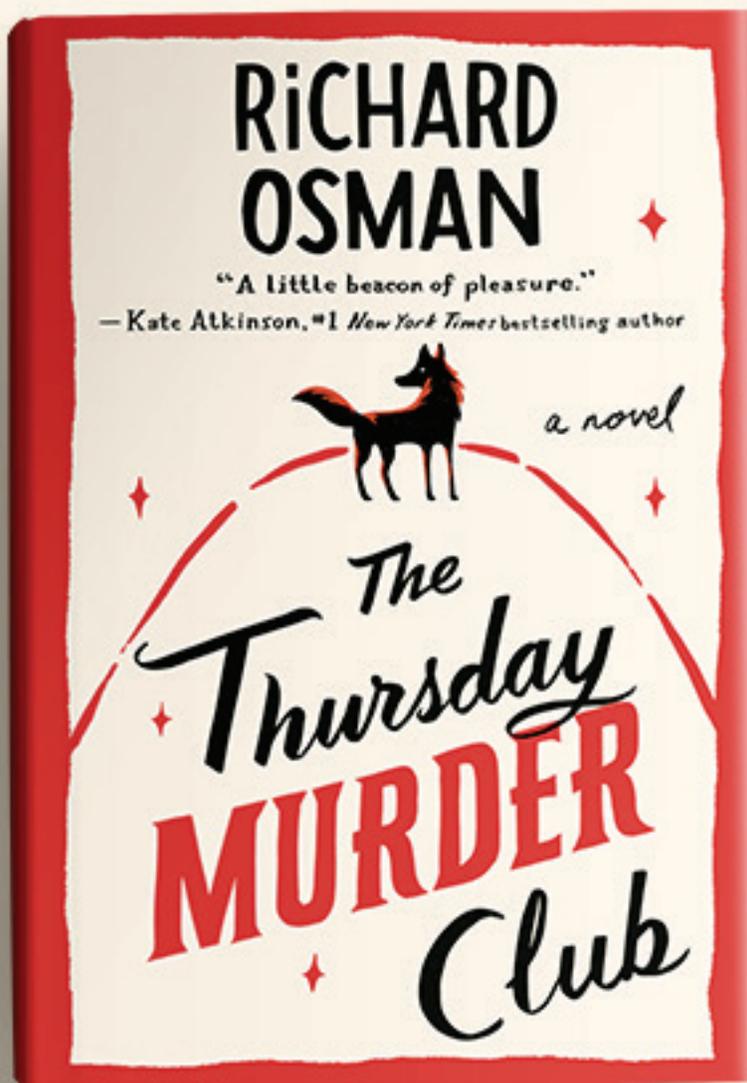
Recipe from Nigella.com. Lemon Drizzle Cake is a community recipe submitted by Welsh Girl and has not been tested by Nigella.com so we are not able to answer questions regarding this recipe.

Photo © Amy Treasure, amytreasure.com

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