

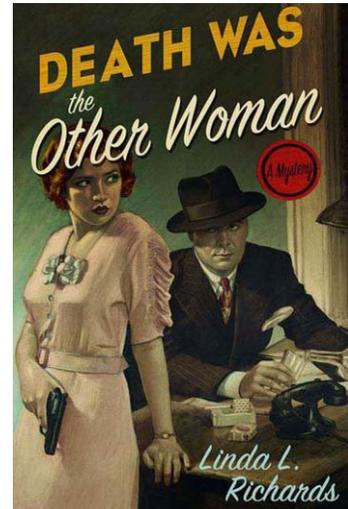
READING GROUP GUIDE

Death Was the Other Woman

By Linda L. Richards

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *Death Was the Other Woman* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *Death Was the Other Woman*.

About the Book

Deep in the Depression, there are two ways to make a living in LA: join the criminals or collar them. Kitty Pangborn's chosen the crime-fighters, becoming secretary to Dexter Theroux, one of the hard-drinking, tough-talking PIs that pepper the city's stew. But after Dex takes a job with the mistress of one of LA's most corrupt businessmen, Kitty isn't so sure what side of the law she's on.

The mistress has asked Dex to tail her lover, and Kitty insists she go along for the ride. She's hoping to find some answers. A corpse isn't the answer she hoped to find, though. It's the type of discovery that she wishes would just disappear, and when it does she begins to realize that there's more to this story than jealousy, and more money at risk than her paycheck.

Rich with period detail and sharp dialogue, Richards has created a quick-witted character who gives a brand new twist to the hard-boiled style.



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About the Author

Linda L. Richards is the editor and cofounder of *January* magazine and a regular contributor to *The Rap Sheet*. *Mad Money*, her first work of long fiction, was nominated for the Arthur Ellis Award for best first novel. *Death Was the Other Woman* is her hardcover debut. She lives near Vancouver.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe your first impressions of Kitty and Dex. What was your first opinion of them? In what ways did those opinions change throughout the novel? How did they stay the same?
2. Prior to reading *Death Was the Other Woman*, what did you know about the Depression? Was there any knowledge of the era that illuminated your reading of the book?
3. How would you characterize the relationship between Kitty and Dex? How would you expect it to evolve? Did you find yourself identifying with one more than the other?
4. Consider the character of Mustard. What does the fixer represent for Kitty? What does his presence add to your understanding of Kitty Pangborn? Of Dex?
5. Several of the characters in *Death Was the Other Woman* live a life that is not entirely within the law. What does Kitty think of the choices these people make? Is it something she understands and accepts? Why or why not? What about you? When you hear of people going against the law in modern day, what assumptions do you make? Would any of those assumptions be valid in the case of these characters?
6. Long before the events in *Death Was the Other Woman* occur, Dex played a role on the battlefields of W.W.I. How do you think the war touched him? Would Dex be the same person if he hadn't seen action in Europe?
7. Discuss the character of Brucie. What role or roles does she play in the lives of those around her?
8. Did Kitty Pangborn remind you of any other historical or fictional figures? If so, who and in what way? Where else have you seen the story of a young woman taking charge of her life and making the best of a bad situation? Of women of history rising to equality without shedding the trappings of the conventional lives of their times? What, if anything, makes Kitty different?
9. Were you surprised at Brucie's duplicity? Why or why not? How did this news change your view of Rita? Did you see her as more or less culpable in the events that occurred?



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10. At times, Prohibition is almost a character in *Death Was the Other Woman*. It shades and shadows the action in the novel. In what ways would *Death Was the Other Woman* be different if Prohibition were not a factor? How would it be the same? Take it another step: how would the novel be different if it were set in modern times?

11. Many of the attitudes in *Death Was the Other Woman* reflect the sensibility of a different era. In what way is the novel politically incorrect for our time? Did you find any of these sensibilities offensive? What things are better now? What things are worse?

12. Kitty begins *Death Was the Other Woman* as an innocent and, in some ways, she's an innocent as the book ends, as well. However, she's undeniably affected by the events that take place in the story. In what way did you feel she was robbed of her innocence? In what ways did she spare it? Did you feel she should have let it go?

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