



Book Club Set

The Massey Murder

By Charlotte Gray

About the Author

CHARLOTTE GRAY is one of Canada's best-known writers and the author of ten acclaimed books of literary non-fiction. Her most recent bestseller is *The Promise of Canada—150 Years: People and Ideas That Have Shaped Our Country*. Her bestseller *The Massey Murder: A Maid, Her Master, and the Trial That Shocked a Country* won the Toronto Book Award, the Heritage Toronto Book Award, the Canadian Authors Association Lela Common Award for Canadian History and the Arthur Ellis Award for Best Nonfiction Crime Book. It was shortlisted for the RBC Taylor Prize, the Ottawa Book Award for Non-Fiction and the Evergreen Award, and longlisted for the BC National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction. An adaptation of her bestseller *Gold Diggers: Striking It Rich in the Klondike* was broadcast as a television miniseries. An adjunct research professor in the department of history at Carleton University, Charlotte Gray is the recipient of the Pierre Berton Award for distinguished achievement in popularizing Canadian history. She is a Member of the Order of Canada and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Retrieved from: <https://www.harpercollins.ca/9781443409230/the-massey-murder/>

About the Book

A scandalous crime, a sensational trial, a surprise verdict—the true story of Carrie Davies, the maid who shot a Massey.

In February 1915, a member of one of Canada's wealthiest families was shot and killed on the front porch of his home in Toronto as he was returning from work. Carrie Davies, an 18-year-old domestic servant, quickly confessed. But who was the victim here? Charles "Bert" Massey, a scion of a famous family, or the frightened, perhaps mentally unstable Carrie, a penniless British immigrant? When the brilliant lawyer Hartley Dewart, QC, took on her case, his grudge against the powerful Masseys would fuel a dramatic trial that pitted the old order against the new, wealth and privilege against virtue and honest hard work. Set against a backdrop of the Great War in Europe and the changing face of a nation, this sensational crime is brought to vivid life for the first time. As in her previous bestselling book, *Gold Diggers*—now in production as a *Discovery Television* miniseries—multi-award-winning historian and biographer Charlotte Gray has created a captivating narrative rich in detail and brimming with larger-than-life personalities, as she shines a light on a central moment in our past.

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Discussion Questions

1. Why did Carrie Davies return to her employer's home after visiting her sister and brother-in-law?
2. Who was the victim in this story?
3. Was it the correct verdict - why do you think the jury came to the conclusion it did - was justice done?
4. What role did newspapers play? Would the story be told differently today?
5. Why was evidence about Carrie's virginity important?
6. What do you think about the idea of a separate court for female offenders, or of the defence of "unwritten law"?
7. What impression do you have of Crown prosecutor Edward Du Vernet and defence lawyer Hartley Dewart?
8. What difference did it make that Canada was at war?
9. How did the women's suffrage movement affect the case?
10. What difference did the jury's decision make in the long-term?

Author Interview

Q. What do you answer when someone asks “What’s your book about?”

A. A murder that happened 100 years ago, which scandalized the country.

Q. Where did you write the majority of your book?

A. I wrote it in my study at the top of our Ottawa house, where I can spread all my research materials on the floor and stare out at the treetops while I digest the facts and shape the narrative.

Q. Do you listen to music while writing? If so, is there a song/album/artist you associate with your book?

A. I can’t write if there is music playing. If sounds drift up from downstairs, I shut my door very firmly.

Q. What do you like to do when you aren’t writing?

A. Play tennis, go swimming, or open a bottle of wine. Best of all, all three in that order.

Q. How do you know a subject deserves a book, rather than an article or essay?

A. Good question. I’ve often felt that too many non-fiction books are magazine articles stretched beyond their natural limit. A publisher has dangled a big advance in front of a magazine writer with the words, “Your feature would make an excellent story for us.” If a subject has several different angles to explore, plus a really strong spine (the span of a lifetime, the chronology of a court case, the story of a major event), it will appeal to me.

Q. What’s your worst habit as a writer?

A. Sticking to deadlines. Sometimes, this involves sending off a manuscript for an article or a book before it is “cooked.”

Q. What’s one work of non-fiction (it doesn’t have to be a book) you’d give to a young writer to show them how it’s done?

A. Any article in the *New Yorker* particularly if it is written by Susan Orlean, Anthony Lane, David Remnick, Francine Prose, Peter Schjeldahl, Lizzie Widdicombe, Adam Gopnick. Best of all, Roger Angell.

Q. What’s one book you want to be buried with?

A. *Le Grand Meaulnes* by Alan-Fournier.

Q. Which author would you be curious to see tackle the same subject as your book?

A. Hilary Mantel.

Q. What's the last great work of non-fiction you read, other than your fellow nominees?

A. Hermione Lee's biography of Penelope FitzGerald.

Q. Pretend that you had the power to touch another writer and steal their talents (like Rogue from X-Men). Who would you target?

A. Margaret MacMillan.

Retrieved from: <https://nationalpost.com/entertainment/books/charlotte-gray-answers-our-rbc-taylor-prize-questionnaire>

Other Links and Resources

The Massey Murder by Charlotte Gray – Notes for Book Clubs:

<https://www.charlottegray.ca/endnotes/MasseyBookClubNotes.pdf>

Massey Family Tree:

<https://charlottegray.ca/endnotes/MasseyFamilyTree.pdf>

Charlotte Gray: The Maid Who Shot a Massey:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8686i_yDDjo

The Massey Murder: 100 years later, the tabloid tale still fascinates:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/the-massey-murder-100-years-later-the-tabloid-tale-still-fascinates-1.2944925>

Historian revisits a juicy century-old murder case:

https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/historian-revisits-a-juicy-century-old-murder-case/article_b0edd657-a5f3-569b-8e62-58978e78ba76.html

Share your thoughts with other readers!

DATE: _____

BOOK CLUB: _____

BOOK TITLE: _____

As a group we rated this book:

| | | | | |
|------|---|--------------|---|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Ugh! | | It was OK... | | Loved it! |

Would we recommend this book to other book clubs?

Yes No Undecided

Why/why not?

Our discussion: