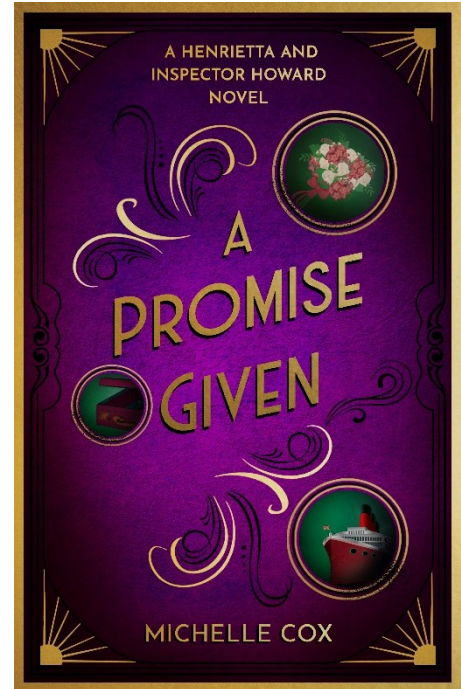


Book Club Discussion Questions for *A Promise Given*

1. Henrietta transitions from her working-class life to becoming Mrs. Clive Howard, future mistress of Highbury. How does her perception of her identity shift in this new role, and what specific challenges, surprises, or moments of internal conflict does she experience in adjusting to this aristocratic world?
2. Despite his official retirement from the police force, Clive remains deeply involved in the Jacobs murder investigation. How does his innate investigative nature continue to manifest throughout the book, and how does this impact his relationships, particularly his new marriage with Henrietta?
3. Oldrich Exley, Henrietta's grandfather, takes charge of Martha and her children's welfare, planning for the boys to go to boarding school and for Elsie to enter society. Discuss how these interventions reflect the rigid societal expectations and class distinctions of the 1930s and analyze the various reactions of Martha and her children to these plans.
4. Wallace Howard is initially implicated in the murder but is revealed to be hiding a secret family. His character also exhibits socialist leanings that contrast sharply with his aristocratic background. How does the author use Wallace's character to comment on societal changes and the crumbling old order in 1930s England?
5. Many characters in the novel, including Clive, Henrietta, Wallace, and Elsie, keep various secrets from one another. Discuss how these deceptions, both large and small, affect relationships within the families and the overall unfolding of the plot.
6. Which character's arc did you find most compelling or surprising? Were there any characters you saw in a new light by the end of the story?
7. The book's title, *A Promise Given*, carries layered meaning. What "promises"—spoken or unspoken—do the characters make in this novel? Which are kept? Which are broken?
8. The novel portrays a spectrum of female characters, including Henrietta, Martha, Elsie, Julia, Lady Linley, and Lady Fairfax. Discuss the societal expectations placed upon these women concerning marriage, education, and social roles, and how they conform to or resist these norms.
9. The deepening relationship between Clive and Henrietta is a core element of the novel. How do they grow as a couple as they navigate new challenges, personal fears, and the murder investigation together? Identify key moments that test or strengthen their bond.
10. "A Promise Given" is praised as a "romantic and atmospheric" novel that offers an "intriguing glimpse into 1930s Chicago" while combining "sleuthing and aristocratic life" with "fiery



romance". How effectively does the author weave together the mystery surrounding Ernest Jacobs's murder with the deepening love story between Henrietta and Clive?

11. Elsie finds herself in a complicated romantic situation, torn between her long-standing affection for Stanley and the attention she receives from Lieutenant Harrison Barnes-Smith. Discuss her internal struggles, including her feelings of inadequacy, and the various influences that shape her decisions.
12. The novel vividly recreates the atmosphere of the 1930s in both Chicago and England. How do the different settings—from the opulent Highbury and Castle Linley to the more humble Palmer Square apartment, pubs, and mills—contribute to the atmosphere, character development, and underlying social commentary of the story?