

Book Club Discussion Guide



The Case of the Murderous Dr. Cream by Dean Jobb, Page 1 (May 2022)

The Case of the Murderous Dr. Cream: the Hunt for a Victorian Era Serial Killer

By Dean Jobb

About the author:

I am an award-winning author and journalist and a professor at the University of King's College in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where I teach in the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Nonfiction program. I specialize in true crime and my monthly column on the genre, "Stranger Than Fiction," appears in Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. My articles and book reviews appear in CrimeReads, Inside History magazine, the Chicago Review of Books and the Washington Independent Review of Books. During my 35-year career as a newspaper staff writer and freelance journalist I have written features and commentaries on an array of subjects – history, current events, law, business, politics, media ethics, science, travel, and the craft of nonfiction. (BTW, my surname is pronounced like robe, not robb. It's a long story.)

Source: Author's website: (<http://www.deanjobb.com/>)

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About this book:

This is the true story of a Victorian Era monster, the ruthless “Lambeth Poisoner.” *The Case of the Murderous Dr. Cream* is the first complete account of his crimes, his victims, and how Scotland Yard’s best detectives struggled to end his final and deadliest attacks. It explores why the authorities in the United States, Canada and Britain failed to identify and stop one of the earliest and most prolific serial killers of modern times. It exposes the flawed police investigations and primitive forensic tests that enabled him to evade suspicion and detection, how he was convicted and imprisoned in the midst of his poisoning spree, and why he was freed to kill again. And it shows how the stifling morality and hypocrisy of Victorian society allowed him to prey on vulnerable and desperate women, many of whom had turned to him for medical help.

Source: Author’s website: (<http://www.deanjobb.com/>)

Discussion Questions:

1. Had you heard of Dr. Cream before this book? Why do you think his crimes are less well-known than those of Jack the Ripper, a fellow London serial killer?
2. What part of Dr. Cream's exploits did you find the most disturbing, and why?
3. In one case, Cream's lawyer discredits a witness because she is a Black woman. How did the racism and sexism of the time play into Cream's murder spree?
4. What did you think was the most frustrating time Cream evaded justice?
5. The book takes you along with Inspector Frederick Smith Jarvis as he uncovers the true depth and depravity of Dr. Cream's crimes. Did this story structure work for you? Why or why not?

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6. In one Sherlock Holmes story, Holmes famously tells Watson, "When a doctor goes wrong, he is the first of criminals." What do you think this line means, and how does it relate to Cream?
7. Do you believe Dr. Cream was responsible for more murders than the ones we know he committed?
8. What similarities and differences did you see in the United States legal system at the time and England's legal system?
9. If you were to turn this story into a movie or TV show, who would you cast as Dr. Cream?
10. Did this book inspire you to seek out other nonfiction about the era? What similar books have you read and would recommend to others?

Source: Oxygen's website (<https://www.oxygen.com/>)