

Book Club Discussion Guide

About the Author



Book Title: Massey Murder **by Charlotte Gray**

Charlotte Gray is one of Canada's best-known writers, and author of ten acclaimed books of literary non-fiction. Born in Sheffield, England, and educated at Oxford University and the London School of Economics, she began her writing career in England as a magazine editor and newspaper columnist. After coming to Canada in 1979, she worked as a political commentator, book reviewer and magazine columnist before she turned to biography and popular history.

Charlotte's most recent book is *The Promise of Canada: 150 Years — People and Ideas That Have Shaped Our Country*. Her previous book, *The Massey Murder: A Maid, Her Master and The Trial that Shocked a Country*, won the Toronto Book Award and the Toronto Heritage Book Award, and was long-listed for the B.C. Non-fiction Award, and shortlisted for the Charles Taylor Award, the Ottawa Award for Non-

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Fiction and the Evergreen Award. An adaptation of her 2010 bestseller *Gold Diggers, Striking It Rich in the Klondike* was broadcast as a television miniseries in early 2014 on the US Discovery Channel, under the title *Klondike*. In 2008, Charlotte published *Nellie McClung*, a short biography of Canada's leading women's rights activist in the Penguin Series, Extraordinary Canadians. Her 2006 bestseller, *Reluctant Genius: The Passionate Life and Inventive Mind of Alexander Graham Bell*, won the Donald Creighton Award for Ontario History and the City of Ottawa Book Award. It was also nominated for the Nereus Writers' Trust Non-Fiction Prize, the National Business Book Award and the Trillium Award. Her previous five books, which include *Sisters in the Wilderness*, *The Lives of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill*, *Flint & Feather*, *The Life and Times of E. Pauline Johnson* and *A Museum Called Canada*, were all award-winning bestsellers.

Charlotte appears regularly on radio and television as a political and cultural commentator. She was a celebrity panelist, championing Jane Urquhart's novel *Away*, in CBC Radio's annual battle of the books, *Canada Reads*, with Jian Ghomeshi. In 2004 she was the advocate for Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister, for the CBC series: *The Greatest Canadian*. She has been a judge for several of Canada's most prestigious literary prizes, including the Giller Prize for Fiction, the Charles Taylor Prize for Non-fiction and the Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing. In 2014, she was short-listed as "Author of the Year" by the Canadian Booksellers Association.

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Charlotte has been awarded five honorary doctorates, from Mount St. Vincent University, Nova Scotia, the University of Ottawa, Queen's University, York University and Carleton University.

An Adjunct Research Professor in the Department of History at Carleton University, Charlotte is the 2003 Recipient of the Pierre Berton Award for distinguished achievement in popularizing Canadian history. She is former chair of the board of Canada's National History Society, which publishes the magazine *Canada's History* (formerly *The Beaver*.) She sits on the boards of the Ottawa International Authors Festival, the Art Canada Institute/Institut de l'Art Canadien, and the Sir Winston Churchill Society of Ottawa. Charlotte is a member of the Order of Canada and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Charlotte lives in Ottawa with her husband George Anderson, and has three sons.



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About the Book

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I love exploring Canadian history, but I'm well aware that many readers feel it is not for

Many prefer other genres, including murder mysteries, dramatic trial scenes and true crime. I share their choices too! So my ninth book takes a real event from our collective past, and shapes it into a narrative that will appeal to mystery lovers and history buffs.

The event occurred nearly a century ago. In February 1915, a member of one of the wealthiest families in Canada was shot and killed on the front porch of his home in Toronto as he was returning from work. Several eyewitnesses rushed to help the dying man. They saw who had killed him in cold blood: Carrie Davies, the eighteen-year-old domestic servant in the Walmer Road household.

But who was the victim here? Charles "Bert" Massey, a scion of a famous family or the frightened, perhaps mentally unstable Carrie, a working-class British immigrant? When the brilliant lawyer Hartley Dewart, Q. C., took on her case, his grudge against the powerful Masseys would fuel a dramatic legal struggle that pitted the old order against the new, wealth and privilege against virtue and honest hard work.



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The Massey Murder is an intriguing true crime book, with a cliff-hanger of a trial. But it is much more than this. Toronto was exploding with new immigrants, Canada was a country in flux, and in Europe young Canadians were within range of German guns. Newspapers resorted to any tactics to increase circulation, and women were finally challenging Victorian conventions. Could the law keep pace with all these bewildering changes?



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Discussion Questions

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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?

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Reviews

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"Nobody writes our nation's history with quite the grace and authority of Charlotte Gray." —*TORONTO STAR*

"Shows why those hardscrabble years captivate us still. . . .Reinforces her reputation as a superb narrative historian." —*NATIONAL POST*

