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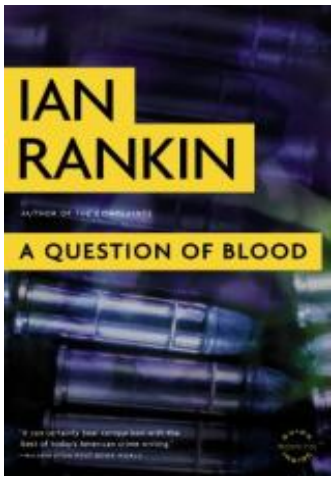
A Question of Blood: An Inspector Rebus Novel

by Ian Rankin



About the Book

When a former soldier and recluse murders two 17-year-old students at a posh Edinburgh boarding school, Rebus immediately suspects there is more to the case than meets the eye. Army investigators show up to snoop around the scene of the crime, and links between the killer and a local group of "Goths" (a morbid clique of black-clad teens who listen to heavy metal music) begin to surface. But just as Rebus finds himself in the thick of the murder inquiry, he's threatened with suspension from the police force: a man who had been menacing his partner and friend, Detective Sergeant Siobhan Clarke, dies in the same house fire that has left Rebus with horrible, painful burns. Rebus is immediately suspected of foul play. Now Rebus is faced with two harrowing missions: He must get to the root of the boarding school killing even as he tries to clear his own name.

Discussion Guide

1. Ian Rankin says, ?The Rebus novels have always examined Edinburgh?s dual identity, its Jekyll and Hyde nature. Private education is part of the city?s fabric, but also a contentious issue in some quarters.? How is this assertion explored in **A Question of Blood**?

2. Discuss Rebus?s relationship with Jean Burchill. How has it changed?

3. How is the price DCS Gill Templer is paying for climbing the career ladder showing? What does Siobhan feel about this? What does it mean that Siobhan is now suffering from panic attacks?

4. ?Fear: the crucial word. Most people would live their whole lives untouched by crime, yet they still feared it, and that fear was real and smothering. The police force existed to allay such fears, yet too often was shown to be fallible, powerless, on hand only after the event, clearing up the mess rather than preventing it.? In your opinion, does this passage refl ect an overly cynical view?

5. Parallel to Rebus?s work is an army investigation, ostensibly into Lee Herdman?s actions. What is actually whetting the two investigators? appetites? Is Rebus as irritated by their presence as he is by old adversaries Claverhouse and Ormiston from Drugs and Major Crime? What do they all think of Rebus?

6. The novel?s title has a double meaning: blood as in lifeblood, blood as in familial ties. Consider the implications of this punning.

7. Why has Rebus lost touch with his brother Michael?

8. Discuss Lee Herdman?s motivations. Why did he act as he did?

9. Bearing in mind their similar army backgrounds, is Lee Herdman the criminal that Rebus is arguably most like, personalitywise, throughout the Rebus series?

10. What is it about Wee Evil Bob that makes Rebus treat him with compassion? Is it an unrecognized fatherly impulse?

11. Does Siobhan have a poor instinct about men when it comes to her own personal relationships? How does she put herself in jeopardy?

12. Who is probably the most surprised at what happens after Rebus finds Siobhan alive?

13. Does Ian Rankin leave the climax open-ended as to what James Bell might do?

14. Is **A Question of Blood** a ?fun? book to read, as the author claims?

Author Bio

Ian Rankin is a #1 international bestselling author. Winner of an Edgar Award and the recipient of a Gold Dagger for fiction and the Chandler-Fulbright Award, he lives in Edinburgh, Scotland, with his wife and their two sons.

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