

Ripper

by Isabel Allende



About the Book

The Jackson women, Indiana and Amanda, have always had each other. Though their bond is strong, mother and daughter are as different as night and day. Indiana, a beautiful holistic healer, is a free-spirited bohemian. Long divorced from Amanda's father, she's reluctant to settle down with either of the men who want her --- Alan, the wealthy scion of one of San Francisco's elite families, and Ryan, an enigmatic, scarred former Navy SEAL.

While her mom looks for the good in people, Amanda is fascinated by the dark side of human nature --- as is her father, the SFPD's deputy chief of homicide. Brilliant and introverted, the MIT-bound high school senior Amanda is a natural-born sleuth addicted to crime novels and to *Ripper*, the online mystery game she plays with her beloved grandfather and friends around the world.

When a string of strange murders occurs across the city, Amanda plunges into her own investigation, probing hints and deductions that elude the police department. But the case becomes all too personal when Indiana suddenly vanishes. Could her mother's disappearance have something to do with the series of deaths? Now, with her mother's life on the line, Amanda must solve the most complex mystery she's ever faced before it's too late.

Discussion Guide

1. Describe Amanda Martin. Think about the adults in her life. Who has the most influence on her? Compare and contrast Amanda to her parents. How does she favor her homicide detective father, and how is she like her free-spirited mother?

2. As we come to know Amanda, we learn that she has trained her senses in a variety of ways, including cataloging people by scent. If you were to categorize the people close to you, what scents would you ascribe to each of them? Choose a few family members or friends and share your insights with the group.
3. Have you ever played a mystery game? Is *Ripper* a good outlet for Amanda's intelligence and curiosity? How might it be detrimental? How does playing the game help her solve the mystery at the center of the novel? Track her steps and how she compiled the clues.
4. Consider the novel's structure. How does Isabel Allende build suspense as the story proceeds? Does she use red herrings? Were you surprised when the killer was revealed? If you guessed, what clues led you to the killer?
5. While *RIPPER* is about Amanda, it is also the story of her mother, Indiana. What is your opinion of Indi? Is she too trusting? Too open? Too free? Or do you think the world would be a better place with more people like her?
6. When we are introduced to Amanda's mother, Indi, we meet a woman with the soul of a hippie, who believes in peace and love. Do you think her experience with a serial killer changed her?
7. Consider the men in the book --- Amanda's father Bob Martin, Navy vet Ryan Miller, and the elusive and wealthy Alan Keller. What attracts Indi to each of these men? What is it about her that draws them? What qualities does Indi need in a man?
8. The city of San Francisco is not only the novel's setting, it's also a character. If you have been to San Francisco, how does the city in the pages of *RIPPER* compare to your experiences? If you haven't been there, what impressions did you get about the city from reading the book?
9. If you have read other Isabel Allende novels, how does this compare to them? What elements carry through her books, and what is different in *RIPPER*?

Author Bio

Isabel Allende, born in Peru and raised in Chile, is a novelist, feminist and philanthropist. She is one of the most widely read authors in the world, having sold more than 80 million copies of her books across 42 languages. She is the author of several bestselling and critically acclaimed books, including *MY NAME IS EMILIA DEL VALLE*, *THE WIND KNOWS MY NAME*, *VIOLETA*, *A LONG PETAL OF THE SEA*, *THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS*, *OF LOVE AND SHADOWS*, *EVA LUNA* and *PAULA*.

In addition to her work as a writer, Isabel devotes much of her time to human rights causes. She has received 15 honorary doctorates, been inducted into the California Hall of Fame, and received the PEN Center Lifetime Achievement Award and the Anisfield-Wolf Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2014, President Barack Obama awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, and in 2018, she received the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters from the National Book Foundation. She lives in California with her husband and dogs.

Critical Praise

“Thoroughly charming book? [A] lot of fun to read.”

— New York Times Book Review

Allende’s tightly plotted tale of crimes obvious and masked is sharply perceptive, utterly charming, and intensely suspenseful.”

— Booklist, starred review

“[A] rip-roaring, entertaining crime novel? Allende remains a remarkable spinner of stories. Her prose is sparkling and graceful? her ability to portray passion and action undimmed. RIPPER grabs you, toys with you, amuses you??

— Minneapolis Star Tribune

Allende, always a captivating storyteller, takes the reader through a parade of San Francisco locales and types, and Amanda --- like Maya --- is an engaging character.”

— San Jose Mercury News

“Appealing characters, a fast-paced plot, and a successfully imagined killer add up to great entertainment.”

— Library Journal

“[Allende’s] facility with plotting and pacing will keep readers turning the pages.”

— Publishers Weekly

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