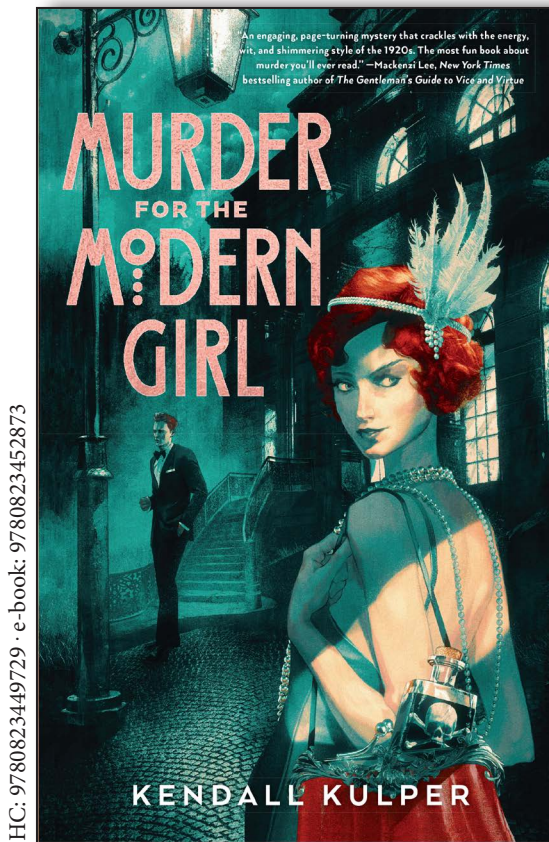


# HOLIDAY HOUSE READING GROUP GUIDE



GRADES  
9 & Up



## Murder for the Modern Girl by Kendall Kulper

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Gatsby-era glamour, a swoon-worthy love story, and an indomitable heroine dazzle in this romp that captures the extravagance of the Roaring Twenties and the dangers of vigilante justice.

A ravishing young mind reader stalks the streets at night in kitten heels, prowling for men to murder. A soft-spoken genius toils away in the city morgue, desperate to unearth the science behind his gift for shapeshifting. It's a match made in 1928 Chicago, where gangsters run City Hall, jazz fills the air, and every good girl's purse conceals a flask.

Until now, eighteen-year-old Ruby's penchant for poison has been a secret. No one knows that she uses her mind-reading abilities to target men who prey on vulnerable women, men who escape the clutches of Chicago "justice." When she meets a brilliant boy working at the morgue, his knack for forensic detail threatens to uncover her dark hobby. Even more unfortunately: sharp, independent Ruby has fallen in love with him.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does this novel reveal about 1920s Chicago? How do people in Chicago society manipulate their way around Prohibition? Explain how the morgue scenes, the extravagant parties, and Chicago's mob presence contribute to the ominous and sinister mood of the novel.
- Describe Ruby Newhouse. What is revealed about Ruby on the first page of the novel? In many mystery novels, the protagonist is the detective. How is Ruby a detective and a villain?
- At what point do Maggie, Ruby's friend, and Vivian, the journalist, learn that Ruby is the murderer? How does Maggie Stowe turn Ruby into a hero?



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- Ruby's father was elected state attorney. Discuss the platform of his campaign. Why are these reforms unpopular among Chicago's politicians?
- At the beginning of the novel, there is an explosion outside the Newhouse residence. How does this establish the central conflict of the novel? Discuss the twists and turns of the plot.
- Discuss Ruby's Tips and Tricks for a Successful Murder (p. 2). Identify scenes in the novel where Ruby follows each of these tips and tricks. Explain why Ruby gets so much satisfaction from her work. How does she justify her crimes?
- Explain the purpose of Ruby Newhouse and Gus Rosewood's alternating stories. How do Ruby and Gus meet? Ruby is a mind reader and Gus is a shape-shifter. Explain how these abilities add to the intrigue of the novel.
- How does Ruby learn Gus's real identity? At what point is it clear that Ruby and Gus are falling in love? When does Ruby realize that Gus is about to uncover her dark activities? How does this frighten her? Discuss Gus's reaction when Ruby tells him goodbye.
- Mayor "Tommy Gun" McGuire is giving Ruby's father a party. Explain how Ruby convinces her father to let her accompany him to the gala. What is her purpose in going to the party? Discuss why Ruby likes getting inside her father's head. What does his mind reveal about Chicago's criminal network?
- "Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive" is a quote from a play by Sir Walter Scott. Explain what the quote means. Apply this quote to the plot and characters of the novel. How might "tangled" refer to Chicago's criminal underbelly?
- Identify each character of the web. Albert Rollins is Attorney Newhouse's private secretary. Describe his trust in Albert. At what point does Ruby realize that Albert is a major player in the tangled web?
- There is usually a trail of clues in a mystery novel. Ruby is on a quest to identify the person who tried to murder her father. Discuss the clues that lead Ruby to the murderer. What is the red herring in this story?
- Who is Herman Coward? Why does Ruby invite Gus to escort her to Herman Coward's party? Why does Coward want to see Ruby in his office? What does Ruby learn when she reads Coward's mind?
- Explain why Ruby says that Coward is desperate. What does Coward mean when he says to Ruby, "We got a horse race" (p. 159)? Discuss the meaning of the term "dead man walking". (p. 246). Why does Coward call Walsh a "dead man walking"?



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Kendall Kulper** is an author living in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She writes historical fantasy for young adult readers. *Murder for the Modern Girl* (JLG Selection) is her first book with Holiday House. She graduated from Harvard University with an honors degree in History & Literature and lives with her husband, two daughters, and much-Instagrammed dog, Abby.

