

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR MURDER AT MALLOWAN HALL

1. In managing the household of the large estate at Mallowan Hall, Phyllida Bright has a lot of responsibility. What do you think would be the biggest challenge she faces on a regular basis—when there isn't a murder!—and how does her personality help or hinder her?
2. Phyllida acts as both a sort of drill sergeant and mother hen to her staff. How does this dual approach help her success as a housekeeper?
3. Phyllida and Dobbie have a competitive relationship, yet they both have the same end goals: a smoothly-run household that keeps the master and mistress happy. Do you think their competition is an asset or a detraction for their positions?
4. Phyllida does her best to ensure that the authorities don't have her real age. Do you think this is merely a vanity, or is she hiding something else? If so, what? And why?
5. Phyllida and Agatha Christie Mallowan have an unusual relationship between housekeeper and employer. What do you think about this? Why do you think Phyllida would have taken a job working for her friend?
6. The shade of red lipstick was instrumental in helping Phyllida identify the murderer. Are you more like Dr. Bhatt, who thinks "red is red" or more like Bradford, who seems to understand the nuances of shade?
7. Phyllida is most certainly *not* a "dog person." Do you think her preference for cats—and Bradford's for dogs—indicates a personality type? If so, why and how? Do you think Phyllida will ever warm up to Myrtle?
8. There are parlourmaids, chambermaids, kitchen maids, footmen, a gardener, a chauffeur, and more at Mallowan Hall. If you were starting off in "service," which position would you want to have?
9. What surprised you most to learn about the way large households like Mallowan Hall were run during the 1930s?
10. There are many references to Agatha Christie novels in *Murder at Mallowan Hall*, especially during conversations between Agatha and Phyllida. Which ones did you catch?
11. What did you think about Phyllida's decision—and her influence on Inspector Cork—to keep Mr. Hartford's personal life private, and to protect Mr. Devine from being charged for "indecentcy"?