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UCF Alumni Book Club

The Maidens by Alex Michaelides

Book Discussion Guide

Book Description

Edward Fosca is a murderer. Of this Mariana is certain. But Fosca is untouchable. A handsome and charismatic Greek tragedy professor at Cambridge University, Fosca is adored by staff and students alike—particularly by the members of a secret society of female students known as The Maidens.

Mariana Andros is a brilliant but troubled group therapist who becomes fixated on The Maidens when one member, a friend of Mariana's niece Zoe, is found murdered in Cambridge.

Mariana, who was once herself a student at the university, quickly suspects that behind the idyllic beauty of the spires and turrets, and beneath the ancient traditions, lies something sinister. And she becomes convinced that, despite his alibi, Edward Fosca is guilty of the murder. But why would the professor target one of his students? And why does he keep returning to the rites of Persephone, the maiden, and her journey to the underworld?

When another body is found, Mariana's obsession with proving Fosca's guilt spirals out of control, threatening to destroy her credibility as well as her closest relationships. But Mariana is determined to stop this killer, even if it costs her everything—including her own life.

About the Author

Alex Michaelides was born and raised in Cyprus. He has an M.A. in English Literature from Trinity College, Cambridge University, and an M.A. in Screenwriting from the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. *The Silent Patient* was his first novel. It spent more than a year on the *New York Times* bestseller list and sold in a record-breaking fifty countries. He lives in London.

General Questions

- What were your overall thoughts of the book?
- Do you usually read this genre?
- When you read thrillers, do you come up with theories as the story unfolds or do you wait to find out the reveals at the end?
- Who would you cast to star in the movie version?
- What do you hope is included in the film and what do you think they could change or add to the story?
- If this isn't the type of book you usually read, did it change your opinion? Do you think you'll read more thrillers?
- Did you know much about Greek mythology before reading this book? Do you think that helped or hindered how you read it?

Book-Specific Questions

- What were your impressions of Mariana?
 - How did the tragedies in her life shape who she is and how she approached relationships?
 - Why was hosting group therapy sessions the right outlet for her?
- There's a huge emphasis on Greek Mythology and particularly Persephone. Why were many of the characters so focused on Persephone?
- Mariana blamed the death of Sebastian on Persephone. Why was it easier for her to blame the death on the supernatural as opposed to the randomness of the accident?
- Mariana's niece Zoe calls her in a panic when her friend goes missing who we later find out is murdered. Mariana suspects that the Greek Tragedy professor Fosca is behind the murders. Did you think Fosca had something to do with it or did you believe he was innocent?
- What would you have done if you were in Mariana's situation?
- What did you make of the secret society of female students known as The Maidens? Was it an act of power control for Fosca?
- Did you have any suspicions about Zoe being involved with the murders or were you surprised at that twist?
- What about the big twist that Zoe and Sebastian had an affair?
 - What are your thoughts on this disturbing revelation?
 - Do you think they actually had an affair?

- We find out that the letters from the killer's point of view were from Sebastian writing to Zoe. Why do you think this was included?
- There's some mentioning on how one's childhood directly impacts how they are as an adult. So a child full of trauma may lash out as an adult. Was that a reasoning behind Sebastian and Zoe's actions?
- While Zoe murdered the women, Sebastian was the mastermind behind it all. Is Zoe a victim, complicit or a mixture of both?
- What role did Fred serve in this story?
- If you read The Silent Patient, did you notice the appearance of Theo?
- What happens next for Mariana? Is she going to try to maintain a relationship with Zoe? Will she stay in contact with Fred?
- Did you ever suspect Henry of being the killer?
- Thoughts on Clarissa? Did you think there would be some twist and she would end up having more of a part to play in the story than she actually did?
- Did Sebastian really write the killer chapters?

Resources

Discussion Questions

<https://bookclubchat.com/books/book-club-questions-for-the-maidens-by-alex-michaelides/>

<https://www.jenryland.com/spoiler-discussion-for-the-maidens/>

Author Website

<https://us.macmillan.com/author/alexmichaelides/>

Author Interview for Celadon Books

<https://celadonbooks.com/novel-inspiration-alex-michaelides-author-of-the-silent-patient-on-writing-the-perfect-thriller/>

Shelfie with Alex Michaelides

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-p0HrIQz4k>

Meet the Writer Podcast

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/alex-michaelides/id1066877934?i=1000468465733>