

That Old Black Magic

William Morrow Paperbacks

By Mary Jane Clark

ISBN: 9780062135483

Introduction

That Old Black Magic is *New York Times* bestselling author Mary Jane Clark's savory and suspenseful confection filled with murder, mystery, history and voodoo, in which Piper Donovan must unmask a devious killer striking in New Orleans's legendary French Quarter.

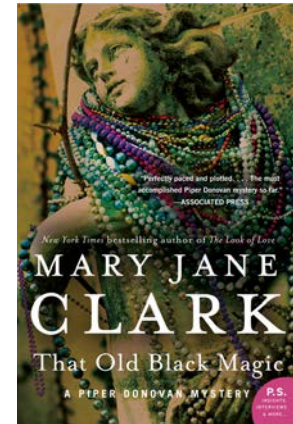
Aspiring actress and wedding-cake decorator Piper Donovan has barely arrived in New Orleans to perfect her pastry skills at the renowned French Quarter bakery, Boulangerie Bertrand, when a ghastly murder rocks the magical city. Intrigued by the case, Piper can't help but look for the "Hoodoo Killer" among the faces around her. Could it be the handsome guide eager to give her special private tours? Or the inscrutable jazz musician who plays on historic Royal Street? What about the ratings-starved radio talk-show host? Or even the amiable owner of the local Gris-Gris Bar?

Though Piper has a full plate decorating cakes for upcoming wedding celebrations, she's also landed an exciting but unnerving role in a movie being shot in the Big Easy. When the murderer strikes again, leaving macabre clues, she thinks she can unmask the killer. But Piper will have to conjure up some old black magic of her own if she hopes to live long enough to reveal the truth.

Questions for Discussion

General Themes for Discussion: New Orleans, Voodoo, Marital infidelity, Caring for a special-needs child, Radio talk shows, Moviemaking, Post-traumatic stress, Fortune-telling, Nursery rhymes.

1. Have you ever visited New Orleans? Did *That Old Black Magic* encourage (or discourage) a visit to the Crescent City? From a tourist's point of view, what was most attractive about New Orleans? Would you ever visit to participate in the parades held for Mardi Gras or St. Patrick's Day?
2. Did you know much about voodoo before reading *That Old Black Magic*? Fifteen percent of New Orleans's citizens practice voodoo: What do you think about this? How did you feel when Ellinore ended her longtime relationship with Nettie over her practice of voodoo? How would you have handled the situation?
3. Statistics tell us that infidelity is the cause for half of the divorces in America; one survey revealed that more than half of us know someone who has an unfaithful spouse. Are you



in that majority? How have you handled the news that a friend's spouse has been cheating? Can a marriage survive adultery? Do you think there was anything Marguerite could have done about Bertrand's roving eye?

4. Do you personally know of someone caring for a special-needs child? Wuzzy Queen's son Connor was already facing difficulties and, having lost his wife, Carla, Wuzzy was strapped trying to work *and* take care of his son's special needs. How did you feel about Connor's cerebral palsy? What did you think about Wuzzy as a parent?
5. Are you a fan of talk radio? *That Old Black Magic* highlighted the pressures that talk-show hosts are under: it seems to be a game of ratings, ratings, ratings. Have some talk shows gone too far in trying to win listeners? Many people get their news from radio talk shows. In your opinion, is this a good way to learn about what's going on in the world?
6. Piper Donovan is a struggling actress who, in New Orleans, gets a terrific chance to finally make it big. How long should all the part-time waiters and waitresses, bakers, and cabdrivers keep at it before they give up on a career in the movies? Do you believe that Piper will be a success?
7. Have you ever had your palm read by a fortune-teller? Did you (or would you) believe what you heard? Do you read your horoscope every day? Are fortune-telling, Tarot cards, and astrology authentic ways to learn about the future, or are they mere entertainment?
8. Do you have a favorite nursery rhyme from childhood? Nursery rhymes and other children's stories aren't always politically correct. What do you think of some of the stereotypes that are (perhaps innocently) supported by nursery rhymes? Which nursery rhymes were told to you as a child?