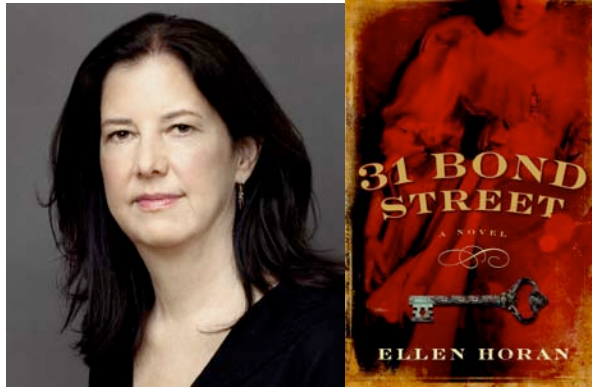


Book Club eVisits with Ellen Horan



- I would love to speak to your book club about 31 Bond Street. These conversations offer me a terrific chance to speak directly with readers, and answer any questions you might have.
- The Story behind the book, New York City past and present, fact vs. fiction, my background ...these are just some of the topics that come up in these intimate dialogues.
- If you would like to arrange for Ellen to visit to your group via speaker phone or video phone (iChat or Skype are a blast!), please contact the author at the email address below. Local NYC groups can request a personal visit if scheduling permits.

Groups of 10 or more, please; visits will last approximately 20-30 minutes.

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Learn more about the video conferencing options:

[Apple's iChat](#) [Skype](#)

By Ellen Horan, Harper/HarperCollins

In the twenty-first century, the moral and legal issues surrounding the Bond Street murder still reverberate within today's society. Here are some suggested discussion and book club questions:

The book is named after the house at 31 Bond Street. In what way is the story built around this house?: This was the era of the townhouse and the importance of its layout and configurations at the time plays a big role in the book. How does the house define the roles of the characters? How important is the layout of the house, the alleys, the privies, back lots, stables, cobblestones, etc.? How does the house evolve and change during the events of the novel?

Varying and Moving Points of view: 31 BOND STREET is a unique novel because it has two leads and the plot is told from both points of view: Henry Clinton, who is the defense lawyer in the murder case and Emma Cunningham, the defendant. The scenes go back and forth from the present with flashbacks. How does this create tension? Does the reader benefit from each point of view? Do you find that you were more involved with one part of the story than the other?

Emma Cunningham's character and the role of women in 19th Century New York: The depiction of gender roles seems to be very different from today. What rights didn't Emma Cunningham have that women have today? Was she a typical product of her class and education? Is she a sympathetic character? Is her motivation to secure a future for her daughters valid? What would happen if she didn't find a husband? Could she support herself? What would be her fate? Was she motivated by survival or greed when she tries to make property deals and enter into the male world of financial negotiation? Is she motivated by survival or greed to find marriages for her daughters? How much is her quest a search for love, and how much a quest for survival? How are her daughter's characters shaped by her decisions? Are women caught in some of the same binds today, or have these dilemmas been entirely eliminated?

31 BOND STREET has a strong sense of romance. Henry Clinton has a romantic relationship to his wife Elisabeth. Emma Cunningham is hoping for a romantic relationship with Harvey Burdell. In what way does Emma Cunningham's desire for security blind her to the true character of Harvey Burdell? Do her romantic illusions blind her to important realities in general? How do the Clinton's shared romantic sensibilities play out in

their relationship? In what way is Elisabeth a strong influence on her husband? In what way is Henry Clinton a good partner to his wife? In what way does he let her down?

The upstairs/downstairs society of the time: Bond Street was considered an upper middle class neighborhood where the hierarchies of the society were firmly entrenched. How did each character fit into this hierarchy? What was the role of the housemistress, which was Emma's role in Harvey Burdell's home? How was that different than a servant? In what ways was it a replacement for a 'wife', who would normally carry out the role of housemistress in a family? How do the tensions between the servant class and upper class reveal themselves at different stages of the story? How do these class tensions affect Emma's fate?

This is also a courtroom drama. Original transcripts were used to recreate the courtroom scenes. What techniques were used to interrogate witnesses and keep transcripts? In which way is the tension between the two characters, Henry Clinton and Abraham Oakey Hall, central to the story? In which ways do these men use the courtroom to advance their own ambitions? How important are the speeches made by the lawyers in the courtroom in influencing the jury? How do they affect the reader? How do they reveal the prejudices of the time? What other strategies or testimonies were effective in influencing the jurymen or the reader, as the trial leads to a verdict.

But at the same time it is a realistic crime novel that illuminates the way crimes were solved at the time. The notion of "house arrest" and a coroner's jury have fallen out of legal practice. They lasted in England longer than in the U.S. How did these practices influence crime writing in from the past to the present? The private or police detective did not yet have a role in the criminal process in New York City in 1857. Is a crime story different if it isn't written from the point of view of a lead detective?

New York City is an important character in this book. New York is an urban environment but the book also depicts the waterways, geography and natural boundaries. Do you think the differences in population or transportation made city life less vital? How was each character shaped by the pressures of urban life? Who was benefiting from the rapid growth of the city and who was not? Even though the city is radically changed, how many of the divisions of urban life still exist today in American cities: uptown/downtown, residential/commercial, encroaching development/green spaces, wealth/poverty, high/low entertainment districts?