

## The Reading Guide

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### Reading Group Questions

1. The main character in MYSTERY MAN is eccentric, nervous and borderline psychotic. To what extent do we sympathise with him and to what extent do we laugh at him?
2. How do you feel about Bateman's treatment of the holocaust in the novel?
3. Is the Irish "Craic" – the wit of the Irish – myth or reality?
4. What do you think of MYSTERY MAN's view of Belfast?
5. What is your reaction to the relationship of the main character and Alison – do you think their's is a lasting relationship?
6. Another mysterious figure in the book is the main character's mother – she never appears in the novel – do you believe that she actually exists?
7. Do you think MYSTERY MAN would make a good film and who would you cast in the leading roles?

### FURTHER READING

Orpheus Rising – Bateman

I Predict A Riot – Bateman

The New York Trilogy – Paul Auster

The Eyre Affair – Jasper Fforde

The Big Sleep – Raymond Chandler

The Yellow Dog – Georges Simenon

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### About the Book

He's the Man With No Name and the owner of No Alibis, a mystery bookshop in Belfast. But when a detective agency next door goes bust, the agency's clients start calling into his shop asking him to solve their cases. It's an easy way to sell books to his gullible customers and Alison, the beautiful girl in the jewellery shop across the road, will surely be impressed. Except she's not. And when they break into the shuttered shop on a dare, they have their answer. Suddenly they're catapulted along a murder trail which leads them from modern dance to Nazi secrets and serial killers...

### Reviews

'Grown-up stuff, told in a joyfully childish way' **Mirror**

'An inspired satire on crime fiction's genre clichés...Seductive' **Telegraph**

'Sometimes brutal, often blackly humorous and always terrific'  
**Peter Gutteridge, Observer**

'Bateman writes with sympathy and humour' **Telegraph**

'Comic thrillers that are actually comic and thrilling' '50 Crime Writers to Read Before You Die' **Daily Telegraph**

'He delivers an extraordinary mix of plots and characters begging to be described as colourful, zany, absurd and surreal' **The Times**

'Real humour in abundance. A riot of colour and absurdity, where even the bad guys are strangely loveable and in one way or another everyone ultimately gets what they want, if not what they deserve' **Henry Sutton, Mirror**

'Bateman himself is quickly growing into a legend so pick up a piece of him now'  
**Daily Sport**

'A superb comic talent. Comparisons with Carl Hiaasen are not inappropriate. The book succeeds because Batemen remains in control of his rampant inventiveness'  
**Marcel Berlins, The Times**

'Bateman does not follow in the conventional tradition of crime-writing; rather he should be seen as the natural heir to the black comic novels of Tom Sharpe'  
**Mike Ripley, Birmingham Post**

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**Extract**

There aren't many private eyes in Belfast, and now, apparently there's one fewer. I know this because his shop was right next to mine. His name was Malcolm Carlyle and he seemed a decent sort. He would call in for a chat and a browse now and again when business was slow. His business, that is. His business was called Private Eye, big yellow letters on a black background. Then one day he didn't open up, and I never saw him again, and that was the start of my problems because he was still listed in the Yellow Pages, but when people couldn't get a response on the phone well, they thought, he must be good, he's so busy, he's changed his number, gone ex-directory, so they'd come down to check what was happening with their cases, find the door locked, stand back and take a look at the place and see my shop next door and think there must be some kind of a connection because you don't have a shop called Private Eye and a shop called No Alibis sitting side by side for no reason as all. So they'd come in and furtively browse through the crime books, all the time eyeing me up behind the counter, trying to work out if I could possibly be connected to the private eye they were looking for and if there was a connecting door between the shops, and whether I did this bookselling thing as a kind of respectable cover for my night-time manoeuvres on the cold, dark streets of Belfast. They'd gotten it wrong of course. Bookselling is more cut-throat than you can possibly imagine.

The first fella who actually approached me was called Robert Geary; he was a civil servant in the Department of Education in Bangor, he was married, he had three children aged from nine to twelve and he supported Manchester United. We all have our crosses to bear. He told me all this while making a meal out of paying for an Agatha Christie novel, so I knew something was up.

No one had bought a Christie in years.

**About the author**

Bateman was a journalist in Northern Ireland before becoming a full-time writer. His first novel, *DIVORCING JACK*, won the Betty Trask Prize, and all his novels have been critically acclaimed. He wrote the screenplays for the feature films *DIVORCING JACK*, *CROSSMAHEART* and *WILD ABOUT HARRY*. He lives in Ireland with his family.

Go to [www.colinbateman.com](http://www.colinbateman.com) to find out more.