

Reading Group Questions for *The Coroner*:

1. Do you find Jenny Cooper an easy woman to relate to? Do your feelings about her change as the book progresses?
2. Jenny suffers from acute Generalised Anxiety Syndrome, a condition suffered by millions. Is she right to try to disguise her condition? Should she continue to work despite her addiction to tranquillizers?
3. Jenny's son, Ross, has chosen to live with his father after his parents' divorce. Jenny could have fought harder for custody – should she have? Does her failure to fight tooth and nail for custody make her a bad mother?
4. What do you feel about Simone Wills – is she a victim, or the author of her own suffering? Is she in any way to blame for the death of her son?
5. How much were Katy Taylor's parents to blame for her death? Was Jenny right to insist on exhuming Katy's body despite her mother's objection?
6. The US and Great Britain lead the Western World in the incarceration of children and teenagers. Is imprisonment an appropriate punishment for child offenders? In Scandinavian countries child imprisonment is virtually unheard of. Instead, juvenile offenders are treated as victims of their upbringing and circumstances and treated (not 'punished') in residential schools away from their families that 'caused' their problems. This approach is costly but highly effective: is it right?
7. Is Jenny behaving childishly by entering into an affair with Steve? Is it OK for a woman to have a relationship with a younger man who hasn't achieved as highly as she has? Why do we still have ambivalent feelings about such relationships?
8. Jenny feels a visceral dislike of her ex-husband's girlfriend even though she is glad to be free of her marriage. Is this a childish reaction? Is there an element of cruelty in David's choice of partner?
9. Harry Marshal hadn't told his wife about his homosexual feelings. Was it noble of him to 'suffer in silence' or dishonest? Was it OK for him to act on his feelings while still married? Would it make any difference if his wife no longer desired a physical relationship with him?
10. The author had spent twelve years writing screenplays before writing *The Coroner*. Does the writing style reflect this?
11. The author is an ex-criminal barrister (courtroom lawyer), who is on record as saying that the biggest criminals are not those with whom our prisons are filled, but educated people in professional jobs who make conscious decisions to look the other way when they see an injustice. Do you agree? How far would you be prepared to go to achieve justice – would you risk your job, your reputation, your family?