

Book club questions for *What Evil Hides*

1. DI Kay Hunter is a fan-favourite protagonist. How would you describe her approach to this particular case?

DI Kay Hunter is defined by a **methodical calmness** and a deep sense of professional empathy. In this investigation, she must balance the horrific nature of the crime with a team facing **mounting pressure and resource shortages**. Her leadership style is focused on shielding her team and the victim's family from unnecessary trauma while maintaining a relentless pursuit of the truth.

2. Every great detective needs a strong team. What is the dynamic like in the Maidstone incident room?

The team is a blend of experience and fresh energy. **DS Ian Barnes** provides a loyal, occasionally humorous counterpoint to Kay, while **DC Gavin Piper** and **DC Laura Hanway** handle the heavy lifting of digital and field enquiries. The newest addition, **DC Kyle Walker**, brings a modern perspective to a case that is increasingly defined by complex digital footprints.

3. The Mallory family owns the farm where the body is found. What should readers know about them?

Justin and Cassandra Mallory are **modern farmers** trying to keep a historic Kentish business thriving through tourism and specialty craft beer hops. They represent the **struggle of tradition versus modernity**, working long hours against the whims of the weather and bureaucracy, only to have their livelihood threatened by a crime that lands literally on their doorstep.

5. There are several seasonal workers on the farm. What role do they play in the story?

Characters like **Alexandru Popa** and Daniel Ionescu represent the hardworking, often invisible backbone of the agricultural industry. Alexandru, a former army medic from Romania, is the one who discovers the crime scene; his **protective nature** over his younger colleagues and his deep respect for the Mallory family add a layer of humanity to the investigation.

6. The "Garden of England" serves as the backdrop. Why is a Kentish hop garden such a chilling setting for a crime?

The hop vines are beautiful but **claustrophobic**, towering eight metres high and creating natural corridors that deaden sound and block out light. During the harvest, the swish of the scythe and the rustle of hops create a rhythmic urgency. It is a place of **hidden rows and secret corners**, making it the perfect place for "evil to hide" in plain sight.

7. Can you describe the atmospheric discovery that kicks off the novel?

The book opens with a **stunning sunrise** over the Weald of Kent, which is quickly shattered when a worker on a raised corn picker spots something pale blue flapping in the breeze. What follows is a discovery of **unparalleled horror**: a body bound to the trellis wires in a "rictus of agony," turning a peaceful place of harvest into a nightmare.

8. There is a "ritualistic" element mentioned early on. What can you tell us about that without giving too much away?

The pathologist discovers **precise markings** on the victim's body that correspond to "chakras" or energy centres. This suggests a **premeditated, ritualistic level of violence** that suggests the killer wasn't just looking to end a life, but was following a specific, perhaps symbolic, pattern.

9. How does the setting of Maidstone Police Station add to the tension?

The incident room is a hub of **adrenaline and stale coffee**. It captures the frantic energy of a homicide investigation that has gathered pace, where every ringing phone or printer beep could signal a breakthrough – or another dead end.

10. Forensic science plays a huge role. What is the most intriguing piece of evidence found early in the search?

Beyond the body itself, the most significant find is a **unique button made of zinc alloy** with an intricate embossed design, found near evidence of a struggle by a barbed-wire fence. It's a tiny detail that suggests the killer might have left a piece of themselves behind in their haste.

11. The title of the book is "What Evil Hides." How does that theme permeate the book?

The novel explores how **darkness can exist within the most picturesque settings** and the most normal relationships. It asks the question: how well do we really know the people around us? Whether it's a quiet farmhand, a business competitor, or a lifelong friend, the story suggests that everyone has **secrets hidden beneath the surface**.

12. "Tradition vs. Modernity" is a recurring theme. How is this expressed?

This is seen through the lens of the **farming industry**. The Mallorys are moving away from old-school grain farming to focus on the flourishing local craft beer industry and tourism. This shift creates tension with those who prefer the old ways, illustrating the **growing pains of rural communities** in the 21st century.

13. What does the book say about the toll of Policing in the current climate?

The book highlights the **real-world struggles of the force**: budget cuts, lack of reinforcements, and the emotional weight of delivering the news that every parent dreads. DI Kay Hunter's frustration with the bureaucracy and politics of headquarters makes her a very relatable hero for modern readers.

14. Small-town secrets are a staple of crime fiction. How does this book put a fresh spin on that?

The investigation doesn't just look at the locals; it examines the **transient nature of seasonal work and tourism**. By bringing in characters from different backgrounds and countries, the book creates a **melting pot of suspects**, where any one of them could be hiding a past that the quiet village of Kent knows nothing about.

15. Without spoilers, what is the primary "hook" that will keep readers turning the pages?

The ultimate hook is the **mystery of the motive**. The victim was a talented man with no criminal record and no obvious enemies. The sheer **brutality and symbolic nature** of his death suggest a motive far more complex than a simple robbery or argument, leaving readers to wonder what could drive someone to such a devilish act