

A Note from the Author

It will come as no surprise to you to learn that I love books, discussing books, and book clubs. If you've chosen *Notes on a Drowning* to discuss at your book group, or are considering it, then I hope these suggested questions and introduction will help. I've included some food and snacks suggestions, because obviously these things are important at book club.

If your group has specific questions, do email me at anna@annamazzola.com or at my website <https://annamazzola.com> where you can also sign up to my Reading Club. I occasionally speak at book clubs, in person or online, so get in touch. You can also follow me on Instagram or Facebook, where I'm @annamazzolawriter, or BlueSky where I'm @annamazz.bsky.social

Notes on a Drowning is a legal/political thriller about two determined women – a solicitor and a political adviser – who have to come together to investigate the death of a young woman found drowned in the Thames. This leads them on the trail of a scandal involving misogyny and international corruption that leads right to the centre of Government. Set partly in London, partly in Tokyo, the novel was a *Times* thriller of the month and *The Express* called it, 'A brilliantly pacy page-turner with a deeply compassionate centre.' I think it will give you plenty to discuss.

A more detailed intro to the book is below together with some suggested questions. The questions contain plot spoilers, so don't read them until you've read the book!

Many thanks and happy reading and chatting,

Anna x

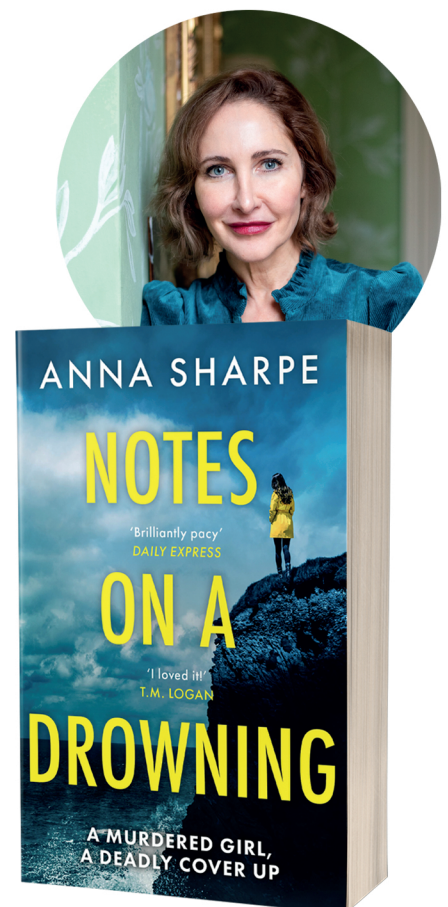
Book Party Food and Drink Suggestions

All of the following are eaten or drunk by characters in the novel at some point. See if you can pinpoint which character and where!

Drinks: Wine, Singapore Sling cocktails, sparkling water, smoothies and coffee

Snacks: Hobnobs, Krispy Kreme doughnuts, sausage rolls, crisps and canapes

Mains: Pizza, Katsudon and other Japanese food



Order in paperback

Introduction to *Notes on a Drowning*

The initial idea for *Notes on a Drowning* came from listening to the survivors of Epstein talk about what they'd been through, and learning about the powerful people who'd not only concealed what was going on, but merrily joined in. All that glitz, power and money, with something desperately seedy beneath. Why did so many people go along with it? What other machinations have remained under wraps? It was also inspired by reading about the lives of the uber rich, and discovering how their London exists on an entirely different level to ours.

The novel is set mainly in London, partly in Tokyo. It begins in the world of Alex, a jaded but smart legal aid solicitor who, as a favour to a colleague, takes on an inquest into the death of a Moldovan girl, Natalia, found drowned in the Thames. Natalia's sister doesn't believe Natalia's death was an accident. Alex comes to believe it too. Meanwhile, north of the Thames, Kat has secured her dream job: special adviser to the charismatic new Home Secretary, introducing her to a seductive new world of power, elitism and influence. But she also comes across Natalia's case, and she too begins to question the official narrative.

There are good reasons for the two women not to want to work together, but they must overcome their differences to get to the heart of a political scandal involving misogyny, international corruption and abuse of power. In the background, is the fact that Alex's sister went missing twelve years before and has never been found. All this makes the book sound very serious, but in fact quite a lot of it is funny to even out the darkness. I think we're all in need of some humour at the moment.

They say 'write what you know', which I generally haven't to date, but I work with survivors in my role as a consultant solicitor, so it was no great surprise that I'd want to explore abuse of power in my fiction. I was also a solicitor in legal aid practices for many years and, before that, a government lawyer, so, in writing Alex and Kat, I've used bits of my own experiences (not cases, but the funny office stuff) and mixed them with the made-up.

Notes on a Drowning is my first legal/political thriller. I've previously written gothic and historical crime, so this is quite a departure for me. I've had to embrace modern technology, for example fax machines. People keep asking me if Kat and Alex will ride again. I hope so. However, my next Anna Sharpe novel is about a barrister from a criminal family who is made to prosecute the wrong man for a string of serial killings. It's called *Lie for Your Life* and it's out January 2027. Do order it if you enjoyed *Notes on a Drowning*.

Questions for Discussion

DON'T READ THESE IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY READ THE NOVEL BECAUSE THEY CONTAIN SPOILERS!

1. When you first read the prologue, who did you think it was about? If you read it again now, having finished the book, has your view changed?
2. In what year do you think the book is set? Does it matter?
3. Who did you most identify with: Alex, or Kat? Why?
4. What did you think was motivating Kat and Alex to investigate, despite the dangers? Were their motivations different?
5. Do you think the humour in the book works, or does it seem out of place in a thriller?
6. Would you say this was a 'feminist' book? Why?
7. At what point did you begin to suspect that Richard, Alex's boss, was compromised? Did you have any sympathy with him by the end of the book?
8. Why do you think Max Peterson gets away with what he is doing for so long? Does this remind of you of any real-life cases?
9. The author is also a solicitor working with survivors, and has worked in government. Did this come through in the book? Did Alex and Kat's worlds seem plausible?
10. In Chapter 20, Richard says, 'Patricia has absolutely refused to come. It's her book group on Friday evenings – although it seems mainly to be a drinking group, as far as I can deduce.' Is this an unfair characterisation of book groups?
11. Did you predict how the book would end, or did it take you by surprise? Was the ending satisfying?
12. Can you see Kat and Alex working on another case together? What might that be?
13. Have you read any of the author's historical novels (writing as Anna Mazzola)? Are there similarities between her historical novels and her legal thrillers?

Once again, thank you for reading – or considering – *Notes on a Drowning* for your book group. If you enjoyed the novel, do leave a review on Amazon, Waterstones, Goodreads, tell your friends/enemies etc.