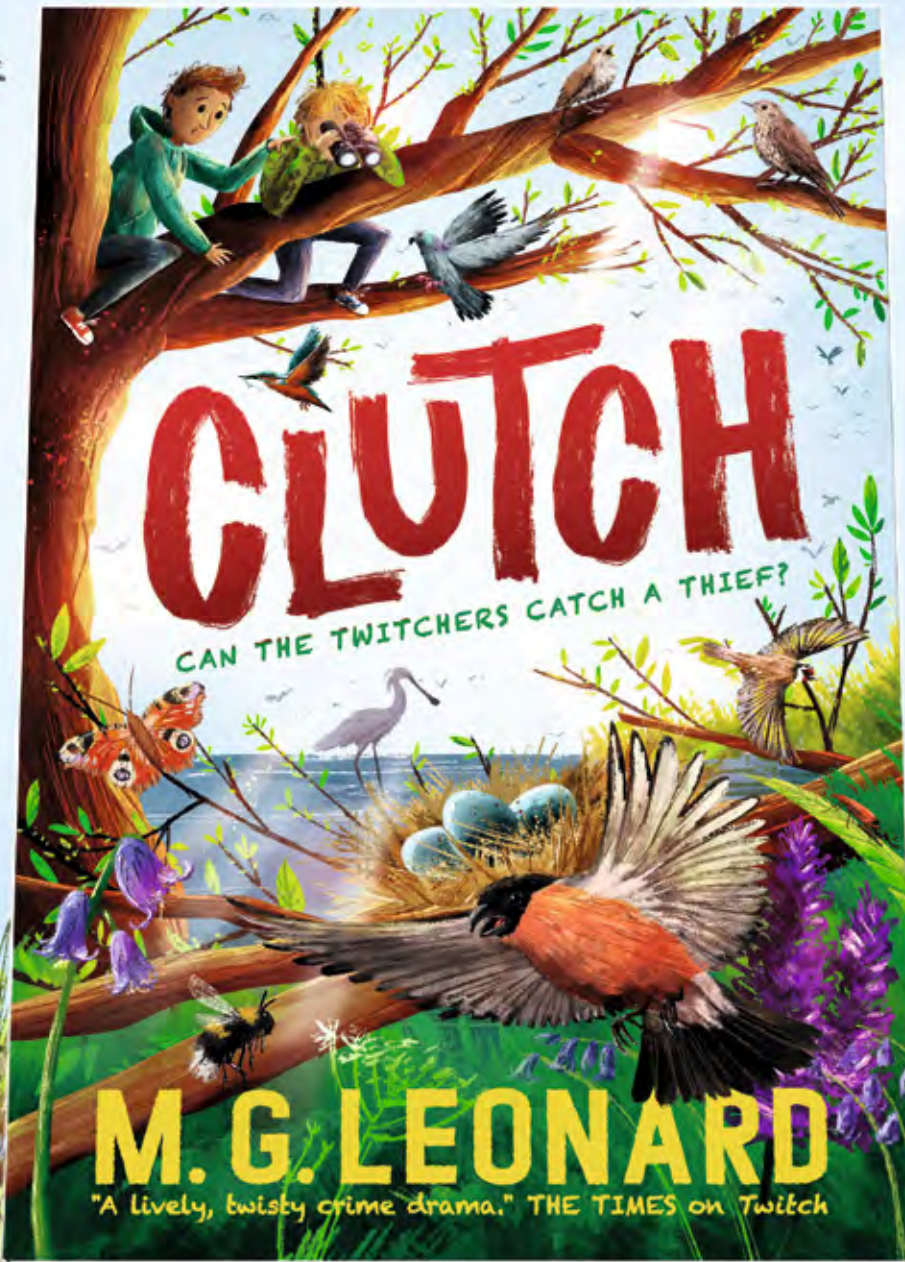


DISCUSSION GUIDE



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Clutch by M. G. Leonard

Discussion Guide

ABOUT THE BOOK

The third instalment in the Twitchers series from M. G. Leonard, *Clutch* is a beautifully crafted mystery, brimming with the same passion for birds that is so infectious in the first books. Twitch and his best friend Jack can't wait to meet up with the rest of the Twitchers again, but when the precious peregrine falcons' nest is robbed, they realise there's an egg thief in Briddvale. Can they discover the thief's identity before any more eggs are stolen? And with rare birds appearing in Aves Wood, can they protect them from any more harm and destruction? This perfectly written crime thriller is another fantastic adventure and an enduring love letter to birds, nature and the outdoors.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

M. G. Leonard is an award-winning, bestselling writer of children's books, as well as a member of Authors4Oceans. Her books are sold in 40 countries, and there is currently a TV series in development based on her Beetle Boy series. Her first picture book, *The Tale of a Toothbrush*, is out now. She is also co-author of the critically acclaimed Adventures on Trains series. Before becoming a writer, M. G. Leonard worked as a digital media producer for the National Theatre, The Royal Opera House and Shakespeare's Globe. She lives by the sea with her husband, two sons and pet beetles.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Before you begin, it is advisable to check the group's knowledge of the first two books. *Clutch* works as a standalone narrative, so it's not essential that everyone has read *Twitch* or *Spark*. It may be worth agreeing ground rules around spoilers or discussion of past books at the start. Otherwise, there is plenty to explore in *Clutch*, from themes running through the book to storycraft and genre. With detailed information about birds and birdwatching, there are plenty of extension opportunities, too, from research projects and creative writing, even though to birdwatching expeditions!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Getting started:

Ask what anyone thought of *Clutch*. What did group members like about it? How did it compare to the other books in the series? What sort of book is it? What *genre* is it? Explore the idea of genre and check understanding. Did the book remind anyone of other stories they've read or heard?

1. Eggers

"...that's what egg collectors call themselves, or, if they're being posh, oologists" – p.25

How do members of the group feel about eggers, or egg thieves? What about the older generations who collected eggs before it was illegal? What is the appeal for the eggers? Why have attitudes changed so much?



2. The Twitchers

“Concentrate on the good things people are doing to make a difference, like us, like the Twitchers.” – p.30

How has life for Twitch changed across the books? How important are the Twitchers to Twitch? Why does Twitch sometimes still go off on his own? Why do the other members of the group love being part of the group so much?

EXTENSION: In groups research any local ornithological clubs, or nature reserves. Find out about local species of birds and present back to the group. Depending on your location or what is nearby, you could even arrange a trip to go birdwatching with the group.

3. Ornithology

“They called me ‘odd’ and seemed to think it was the kind of thing shady people might do.” – p.242

Look together at the passage on p.242. Why is Twitch so upset at the way he is questioned by the police? What is suggested by the line ‘I thought people round here understood who I was’? How does Twitch’s love of birds define him, in his own eyes and in how other people see him?

4. Pam and Terry

“You know what those two remind me of?” Jack said with a chuckle. “That pair of peregrine falcons.” – p.309

How does Terry feel about all the pranks Pam keeps playing on him? Is he really as angry as he seems? Is Pam as mean as she seems? Why is she an honorary Twitcher? What do the two of them bring to the group?

5. Profiling

“You gather all the facts you can about a crime. Then you deduce what kind of a person is likely to have committed it.” – p.20

What detecting skills does Jack bring to the novel? What is he best at? Are there any elements of being a detective he is not good at? What are the most important skills or characteristics for being a good detective? Ask members to explain why they have chosen each skill or trait.

EXTENSION: Create a ‘profile’ of a great detective individually, or in groups. Focus on all the required characteristics and skills.

6. Following threads

“Look, we’ve done brilliantly today. We’ve learned loads; we have a list of named suspects.” – p.97

How does the author keep the reader guessing at who might be the thief? What techniques does she use to stop you knowing for certain who took the eggs? What hints and clues are there in the book? Are there any red herrings? What effect does this have?



7. The hide

“‘Oh!’ Tippi bounded forward. ‘You’ve built a crow’s nest! I see it! It looks amazing!’”
– p.74

Twitch’s hide has been improved upon and expanded since the first book. What does the hide mean to Twitch and his friends? What effect does the thief having been inside their space have on them? Who likes the idea of a hide? Why?

EXTENSION: Design a perfect hide for birdwatching. What does it need to include?

8. Canal Masters

“‘If an egg thief lived in Briddvale,’ Twitch said, ‘I’m certain I’d already know about it.’”
– p.59

Why does the author include the Canal Masters fishing competition in the novel? What purpose does it serve? How does the competition aid the *plot* of the book? Depending on the group’s age and ability, you might want to look at the concept of a narrative device.

9. Pippa Bettany

“‘Pippa Bettany?’ Jack’s tone was scornful. ‘Is that little kid still following you around?’”
– p.23

What did the group think of Pippa’s character? Did anyone think she might be the thief? Why? Or why not? Why does she act the way she does? Why does she give Twitch the tin? Consider the quotation alongside this question. Why is it significant that it’s Jack’s idea to invite Pippa to join the Twitchers at the end of the novel?

1. Police questioning

“‘I’m afraid,’ Inspector Khan said, ‘I don’t believe you.’” – p.188

Why don’t the police believe Twitch? Why does Constable Greenwood, who Twitch knows, start calling him Corvus? What does it suggest about the attitudes of some adults in the book that they believe the witness who claims to have seen Twitch but not Twitch or the other children? Consider how the unravelling of the mystery is also the catalyst for Twitch spending time with lots of new people – Jack, Amita, the Kingfishers, friends at school, etc. What has the mystery done for Twitch?

