



## A Crime Writer's Literary Journey VICKI DELANY

### Exploring Classics, Canadian Crime, and Culinary Inspirations with Vicki Delany

Few names shine as brightly as Vicki Delany's, in the captivating world of Canadian crime writing. A literary chameleon, she effortlessly navigates various genres, from clever cozies to Gothic thrillers, gritty police procedurals to historical fiction. As a national bestseller in the U.S. and a prolific author with over fifty books under her belt, Delany has become an icon in the realm of crime literature, known for her versatility and storytelling prowess.

Delving into her impressive repertoire, we had the pleasure of sitting down with Vicki Delany for an insightful conversation that traverses her literary journey, preferences, and the intricacies of her craft. From her role as a past chair of the Crime Writers of Canada to her co-founding of the Women Killing It Crime Writing Festival, Delany's contributions to the literary community extend beyond the pages of her novels.

As we explore the mind behind the mysteries, we dive into her recent literary escapades. In her Lighthouse Library series, penned under the pseudonym Eva Gates, Delany immerses herself in classic novels, drawing inspiration for her plots. From Patricia Highsmith's "Ripley Under Ground" to Wilkie Collins' "The Moonstone," Delany shares her thoughts on the classics that have recently captured her imagination.

Beyond her own work, we get a glimpse of Delany's ideal literary

*Delve into Vicki Delany's prolific crime writing career spanning cozy mysteries to historical fiction. Discover her passion for classic novels, underrated Canadian crime writers, and her culinary adventures, revealing a multifaceted literary journey.*

gathering. Imagining a party, she extends invitations to Jane Austen and one of the Bronte sisters, drawn to their groundbreaking contributions to the world of fiction.

A passionate advocate for Canadian crime writers, Delany sheds light on some hidden gems within her country's literary landscape. From Barbara Fradkin's gritty police procedurals to Mary Jane Maffini's skillful handling of serious issues in the Camilla MacPhee books, she emphasizes the unfortunate lack of international recognition for many talented Canadian authors.

In this interview, we also gain insights into Delany's reading habits and preferences, discovering her love for psychological suspense novels and the role cozy mysteries play as a palate cleanser in her literary journey. As a prolific author publishing four books a year, Delany discusses her approach to research, emphasizing the importance of setting in her traditional mysteries.

From her early days as a systems analyst juggling a full-time job and three kids to her current status as a celebrated full-time writer with over 50 published books, Delany reflects on her journey and the evolution of

her craft. As she shares anecdotes about unpublished works and personal hobbies like baking and puzzle-solving, readers are treated to a more intimate view of the author behind the mysteries.

Join us in this exclusive interview as we unravel the layers of Vicki Delany's literary world, celebrating her contributions to the crime genre and gaining valuable insights into her creative process and literary influences.

Vicki Delany is one of Canada's most prolific and varied crime writers and a national bestseller in the U.S. She has written more than fifty books: clever cozies to Gothic thrillers to gritty police procedurals, to historical fiction and novellas for adult literacy. She is currently writing the Tea by the Sea mysteries, the Sherlock Holmes Bookshop series, the Year-Round Christmas mysteries, and the Lighthouse Library series (as Eva Gates).

Vicki is a past chair of the Crime Writers of Canada and co-founder and organizer of the Women Killing It Crime Writing Festival. Her work has been nominated for the Derringer, the Bony Blythe, the Ontario Library Association Golden Oak, and the Arthur Ellis Awards. Vicki is the recipient of the 2019 Derrick Murdoch Award

for contributions to Canadian crime writing. She lives in Prince Edward County, Ontario.

**Are there any classic novels that you only recently read for the first time?**

In my Lighthouse Library books I write under the pen name of Eva Gates, the book the Bodie Island Lighthouse Library Classic Novel Reading Club is reading is reflected (loosely) in the plot of my book. I have been reading the classics for that. The most recent was Ripley Under Ground, by Patricia Highsmith. Perhaps not exactly a classic, but I think it can be called a classic of the mystery genre. I thought it was great. I read The Moonstone by Wilkie Collins for an earlier book, which is fabulous. There have been some flops. The House of the Seven Gables by Nathaniel Hawthorne is, in my humble opinion, turgid, but it did give me material to work with for my book.

**You're organising a party. Which two authors, dead or alive, do you invite?**

Jane Austen, for sure, and one of the Bronte sisters, probably Charlotte. If Charlotte is unavailable, I'll invite Emily or Anne. I'm particularly interested in them because they were such ground breakers. Not only as women succeeding as writers (the Brontes originally published under men's names) but truly creating the world of



*Vicki Delany: Crafting Mysteries and Exploring Literary Worlds..*  
Photos by Iden Ford

fiction as we know it today.

**Who are your favourite writers? Are there any who aren't as widely known as they should be, whom you'd recommend in particular?**

I'm Canadian and I think it's a tragedy so many great Canadian crime writers are unknown outside of Canada. For some reason, books set in Canada simply can not get international traction. (There's one exception, and I'm sure I don't need to say her name) Unfortunately that isn't new. I'd highly recommend the Inspector Greene novels by Barbara Fradkin for gritty police procedurals, the Camilla MacPhee books by Mary Jane Maffini for a light handling of serious issues, and the Thaddeous Lewis novels by Janet Kellough, proving Canadian history can be exciting.

Aside from them, who I've been reading for a long time, there are some great books coming out of Australia these days. I'd say Jane Harper is my favourite writer writing today. Her sense of setting is extraordinary.

**What do you read when you're working on a book? And what kind of reading do you avoid while writing?**

I publish four books a year, so I'm never not working on a book. I just read what I like, mostly crime novels. These days, I'm enjoying a lot of the standalone psychological suspense novels that are so popular right now. I'm often asked to write a blurb for a forthcoming book, and I love doing that, particularly if the author is new to me. Because I write cozy mysteries, the books I'm asked to read are generally cozies. I usually read darker stuff and I find the cozies or traditional mysteries a nice palate cleanser.

**What moves you most in a work of literature?**

I'd have to say setting impresses me the most. Not sure if that 'moves' me, but I love to be totally immersed in a time and a place. I mentioned Jane Harper above, who has a fabulous eye for setting. I went to Malaysia only because I loved The Garden of Evening Mists by Tan Twan Eng so much.

**What sort of book research do you do and how much time does it take?**

Because I write traditional, or cozy, mysteries most of my research is about places where the books are set. I believe setting is vitally important in creating a good book, so I want to get it right. I'm planning a trip to the UK next month. I am taking char-

acters from one of my series to Halifax, in Yorkshire, and from another to London. Specifically, I'll be checking out great places for afternoon tea. A tough job but someone has to do it. Most other research I can do on the computer – poisons and other killing methods for example.

**Have you always been a full time writer?**

Not at all. My first three books were published while I was working full time as a systems analyst and had three kids at home. I was lucky enough to be able to take early retirement from that job around the time the last of the children finished her education. I sold my house in the suburbs, used half the money to buy a house in the country, invested the rest to provide me with a bit of income while I devoted myself to writing. I'm very lucky and it's all worked out well for me.

**How many books have you written? Anything unpublished?**

My 50th published book came out in June 2023. I write four books a year, so the number is climbing. Yes, I have stuff in my bottom drawer. I first tried my hand writing romance. Total dreck, if I do say so myself. I have a couple of tough, gritty suspense novels, that I quite liked but no one else did. So they sit. One day maybe, I'll have another go at them.

**Where do you do your best reading?**

Unquestionably on an airplane. I travel a lot and sometimes to great distances. I rarely watch a movie, and never play games, and I don't buy the Wi-Fi. I find that these days being on a plane is about the only time I have a long stretch of time to get fully immersed in a book, the way I used to long ago. Otherwise, there are just too many distractions, all around, all the time. Otherwise, I love sitting around a pool in the sun with a good book. But if I'm at home – again too many distractions.

**You write and you read. Any other hobbies?**

I love to cook and I particularly love to bake, but these days I live alone so I don't get much baking done. My Tea by the Sea series contains recipes. When I was trying to find the best shortbread recipe and the best chocolate chip cookie recipe to include in the books, I had my own personal bake-off. The results of that, I delivered around the neighbourhood. I was very popular for a while. I do a lot of jig-saw puzzles, particularly in the long Canadian winter.