



Activity Three - Montalbano Food Lover

Have you ever noticed that the most famous detectives in the European literature are also great experts of fine food? This is how crime novelists try to bring locations and characters to life, and what is more alive than opening the fridge and finding a big portion of homemade pasta with aubergines?

Since the golden age of crime writing (1930- 1940) both Agatha Christie and Rex Stout created food lover inspectors, such as Hercule Poirot and Nero Wolfe: the last one solves cases only to be able to finance his visits to restaurants and his personal chef, Fritz. George Simenon imagines a French police Commissaire (Jules Maigret) who discusses cases with his wife, an haute cuisine chef. But the author which mostly influenced Andrea Camilleri's main character is the Catalan Manuel Vázquez Montalbán. Inspector Montalbano, like Montalbán's fictional private detective (Pepe Carvalho), has a strong passion for gastronomy, that reflects that of Camilleri himself, so every novel includes passionate culinary descriptions of the most diverse traditional Sicilian dishes. Along the lines of the successful Italian narrator, other contemporary crime novelists have chosen to give their stories this "culinary cut". Anne Zouroudi's novels about a Greek detective called Hermes Diaktoros tell us about the Greek food culture; the French investigator Bruno Courage (created by Martin Walker) is a great cook and long descriptions of cooking and eating can be found in his series of novels. Additionally, the American Donna Leon is becoming popular for her commissario Brunetti, another Mediterranean food addict.

Discover some Italian language and food working through the exercises below.



a) INTERVIEW WITH ANDREA CAMILLERI

Read the following text and reply to the questions below



Andrea Camilleri. Photo by Mario Poeta for the University of Cambridge, 2016.

In un'intervista rilasciata al *BBC Radio 4's Food Programme*, Andrea Camilleri rivela che il Commissario Montalbano non è un ingordo né un goloso, al contrario di quello che si potrebbe pensare. Egli, semplicemente, ama mangiare buon cibo e bere buon vino perché il suo essere "un buongustaio" è, nella mente dell'autore, un segno di estremo attaccamento alla vita, che contrasta con la realtà di dover affrontare la morte ogni giorno. La passione di Montalbano per ciò che mangia esprime, dunque, l'immenso piacere di essere vivo. Il Commissario appare spesso frustrato dalla cattiva burocrazia, dalla corruzione, dal Sistema in generale. L'unica vera costante positiva nelle sue vicende è proprio il cibo: qualcosa di semplice e che non ti tradisce, un conforto dalla complessità dell'esistenza e dei rapporti umani. Montalbano, infatti, ama la semplicità e i piatti tradizionali: basta del buon pane con olio, limone, olive e prezzemolo a farlo felice.

La passione per la cucina rappresenta, inoltre, la materializzazione dell'amore materno. Montalbano è spesso da solo, lontano dagli affetti e dalla sua fidanzata Livia che vive a Genova. Il cibo è dunque vissuto quasi come una speranza, nella distanza, di un riavvicinamento con il mondo.



ACTIVITIES

1. Can you describe the two many reasons why inspector Montalbano is a food lover?
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2. Can you make a list of the difficult things that the detective has to face everyday?
.....
3. Does the food play some symbolic role for you also?
.....

b) VOCABULARY

All the following words are related to the food semantic area. Try to match each one with the correct translation.

ITALIAN	ENGLISH
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. INGORDO2. MANGIARE3. BERE4. BUONGUSTAIO5. PIATTO TRADIZIONALE6. OLIO7. PANE8. PREZZEMOLO	<ol style="list-style-type: none">A. To drinkB. ParsleyC. FoodieD. BreadE. GreedyF. Olive oilG. To eatH. Traditional dish

c) TRUE OR FALSE?



Watch the video (in English) from BBC4 (min. 2.51-5.21) to see what Andrea Camilleri says about Montalbano's love for food: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6vkPr-YE_g, then answer to the questions below.

- 1) The latin sentence '*primum vivere deinde indagari*' means that working is Montalbano's sole purpose in life. **V/F**
- 2) Camilleri highlights Montalbano's love for life through his passion for food. **V/F**
- 4) Montalbano loves eating in one particular restaurant. **V/F**
- 3) Inspector Montalbano, like the most of the cops, does not have a sense of humour **V/F**