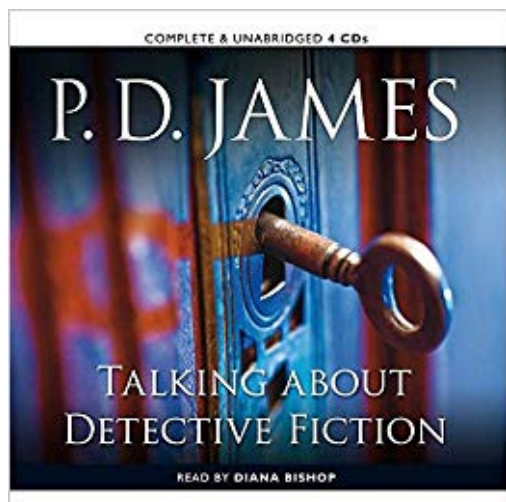


Talking About Detective Fiction by Diana Bishop, P. D. James



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To judge by the worldwide success of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie's Poirot, it is not only the Anglo-Saxons who have an appetite for mystery and mayhem. Talking about the craft of detective writing and sharing her personal thoughts and observations on one of the most popular and enduring forms of literature, P. D. James examines the challenges, achievements, and potential of a genre which has fascinated her for nearly fifty years as a novelist. P. D. James explores the metamorphosis of a genre which has gripped and entertained the popular imagination like no other type of novel. Written by the author widely regarded as the queen of the detective novel, this book is sure to appeal to all aficionados of crime fiction.



Reviews of the Talking About Detective Fiction by Diana Bishop, P. D. James

Whitestone

I'M A TOTAL PD JAMES FAN, SO AM BIASED. I LOVE HER WRITING. CLASSY. IN LOVE W/ HER

ADAM DALGLEISH. CONVINCED HE IS A REAL PERSON :). THERE IS SOME VIOLENCE AND SEX BUT IT IS EXTREMELY MINOR, JUST CHECKED IT OFF BECAUSE IT WAS THERE. FOR ELEGANT WRITING IN THE MYSTERY GENRE, GO TO PD JAMES. I'VE READ ALL HER MYSTERIES AND INTERVIEWS. AM CASTING ABOUT FOR A SUBSTITUTE I COULD ENJOY - PERHAPS RUTH RENDELL....NOT SURE. ENJOY!

CopamHuk

This small book focuses on British detective fiction, but discusses the Americans, too, from Poe to Hammett. It is both a history of the evolution of the detective story, as well as a social and psychological analysis of why it is so popular among more civilized cultures and readers. The elements and structure of the most enduring novels and short stories is revealed as they were invented and refined, from the late 18th century through the 1960s. You don't have to be a huge fan of detective or other crime novels to get a lot out of this book; but any aspiring author in this genre would be remiss to not absorb every page carefully.

Malarad

For readers familiar with P. D. James' beautifully written detective novels, this book is a real treasure. Those who haven't read her books before will also find her writing to be delightfully entertaining and informative. As a long-time devoted fan, I highly recommend the book.

Mohn

P. D. James's nifty little mystery history should be a welcome addition to any whodunit reader's library. At just under 200 pages and small enough to fit into a handbag, it makes a nice take-along book for sit-and-wait situations, an inspired gift for a mystery lover friend and, for many readers, an introduction to writers who'll likely be as new to you as they were to me.

Except for a chapter on Hammett and Chandler of the American hardboiled school and some admiring, but brief, tips of the hat to Sara Paretsky, Georges Simenon and Henning Mankell, James concentrates her attention on her fellow Brits--Conan Doyle, Chesterton, Crispin, Christie, Sayers, Allingham, Marsh, Rendell and others--with particular emphasis on the so-called "Golden Age" when the plots were ingenious, the murders horrible and bizarre and the villains superhumanly cunning ... "not the days of the swift bash to the skull followed by sixty thousand words of psychological insight."

She also looks at how the genre has evolved since the Victorian age and why it has remained so popular. Then, perhaps most interesting of all, she takes us inside the writing process for a closeup look at some of the challenges peculiar to detective-story writing in general and to her own Adam Dalgliesh novels in particular. Most illuminating.

anneli

I REALLY did not need to add nine more to my already lengthy backlog of books, but when P. D. James speaks highly of an author, how is one to resist? I'd already read Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* thirty years ago, and now it awaits a reread on my Kindle.

I'd never gotten around to Ngaio Marsh, now her New Zealand heritage and Shakespearean themes seemed an enticing mix, so *The Singing Shroud* is on its way.

Had never even heard of C. J. Sansom, but P. D. gave him a thumbs up, and his hunchbacked detective Michael Shardlake fighting crime in Tudor England (*Dissolution*)--gotta try that one, right?

Found a good buy on a used Michael Innes Omnibus--*Hamlet, Revenged; Death at the President's Lodging, The Daffodil Affair*--with settings in and around Oxford.

Discovered I'd even missed one of P. D.'s own books, *Devices and Desires*, so MUST have that one; THEN a Golden Age classic which even Dorothy Sayers called "brilliant"--E. C. Bentley's *Trent's Last Case*, has been Kindleized and Whisper-Synced to me

Finally Dorothy Sayers's collection of essays on *The Whimsical Christian*--who knew? I wonder what this outspoken, clever, humorous lady has to say on that subject??

Was already happily acquainted with Chesterton's *Father Brown*, Sayers's *Lord Wimsey*, and Alexander McCall Smith's *Precious Ramotswe*, but alas Ruth Rendell's *Reginald Wexford* and Josephine Tey's *Alan Grant* will have to wait, as will Margery Allingham's *Albert Campion*.

I'm telling you, do NOT read *Talking About Detective Fiction* if you are easily tempted by the intelligent, perceptive observations from this wonderfully reliable and convincing source.

Dandr

Who better than P.D. James herself to provide this short history of the detective story? This book of less than 200 pages can be read in a few hours, but it contains valuable insights into the development and crafting of a literary form which some affect to despise but most find enormously appealing.

James begins with the original detectives Sherlock Holmes and Father Brown (with, since she's concentrating on British writers, a short nod to Edgar Allan Poe), then takes on the inter war Golden Age, pauses to consider the "hard boiled" school, and then comes to my favorite chapter dealing with the four great women detective story writers: Christie, Sayers, Allingham, and Marsh. The book rounds off with a discussion of why some like detective stories while others don't and an overview of more modern stories, with some predictions as to future trends in the oeuvre.

Naturally, since it comes from an experienced and accomplished writer, the book reads very well, with James' trademark wit and penetrating analysis very much on display. Because the format is so short, it often seems as if one is listening to a lecture (and how wonderful it would be to actually hear James give such a lecture!) and occasionally one wishes for more. But James kindly mentions a number of works to which her readers can turn for more information, and also provides a very handy bibliography. I will treasure this book alongside my collection of favorite mysteries, which needless to say includes many of James' own works!

Ferne

If you like good, well written mysteries, this is the book that will tell you what to read and what makes them worth your time. Small caveat, James died several years ago so this does not cover newer release but may well cover the authors if they are still writing.

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