



To the Power of Three

Laura Lippman

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“Powerful....A gripping tale that is a mystery only in the same sense as *To Kill a Mockingbird* was....Brilliant, insightful, moving.”

—*Chicago Sun-Times*

There are excellent reasons why *New York Times* bestselling author Laura Lippman has won the Edgar®, Agatha, Anthony, Nero Wolfe, and every other major award the mystery genre has to offer. *To the Power of Three* is just one of those reasons. Lippman’s brilliant and disturbing tale of three inseparable high school girlfriends in an affluent Baltimore suburb who share dark secrets literally until death, *To the Power of Three* is this “writing powerhouse” (*USA Today*), who has “exploded the boundaries of the mystery genre to become one of the most significant social realists of our time” (Madison Smartt Bell) operating at the very top of her game. Not merely crime fiction, but fiction that gets to the deep psychological, emotional, and human roots of a terrible crime, Lippman’s novel is one that will not be easily forgotten—a must read for fans of Kate Atkinson, Tana French, Jodi Picoult, and Harlan Coben

To the Power of Three Details

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Author : Laura Lippman

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Linda C says

Book was ok, but anti-climatic in the end. Listened to it on discs in the car, which was difficult because the point of view changed so often. I found myself listening to sections over and over to try and figure out who was speaking and wanted to flip the "pages" to re-read something. So if you are going to read it, choose the paper version, not the audio. Agree with other reviewers that it was too long. Felt like the writer realized that she was 500 pages and so needed to end it, fast. Also, I personally didn't like knowing the ending at the beginning, i.e. we know that one of the girls dies by the hand of one of the others. You find out fairly quickly who dies and who the shooter was, so the only mystery is WHY. I did have a fondest for the girls and wanted a different ending, but, of course, there couldn't be a different ending because we already know who lived and who died. Would have been a much better book if it had all been a mystery until the end. Personally, I wouldn't have mentioned the shooting until the climax, but, at the least, the identities should have been kept secret.

Jeanette says

Laura Lippman's best, IMHO. This is about 3 girls who were BFF's over a period of 10 years in a section of Maryland that is high end mixed with old rural on the farther Northern reaches of Baltimore. It's excellent. It holds such deep character study that I have actually read this twice, about 10 years apart. Found it laying in a rental home's "take one, leave one" paperback trove. I left 3 and took this one.

With competition for college path and access being what they are, and with the emotive and crony slants of high school passage- I feel that this book is rather timely in 2015, as much as it was when it was written.

It truly is one of those criminal investigations that exposes and transpose far more than the crux natures of the principle players. It also through secondary characters like Peter and Alexa (the counselor) holds an incredible core of cognition for perceived ambition, goals, success. Lots to ponder upon this entire outplay. It would make a top notch book club pick/discussion.

Having read her series and most of her stand alone novels, this one is absolutely the closest hit to the bull's eye. As a parental observation, it may have more to parse for the generation who has experienced the full span of raising a daughter from an infant to full encompassing adulthood. I doubt most "understanding" of this novel, from some other reviewers. I note from the ratings that many younger people don't grab on this one- or fully grasp the depth of Kit's parents word count.

My rec for Laura Lippman "new" readers is this one. And I will read her remaining stand alone novels that I have missed in the intervening decade. She is one of the few remaining novelists who intrinsically understands vast repercussions for lives completely experienced within the service or lesser working classes of urban and rural America.

Shelly says

Simply exhilarating! Laura Lippman's *To the Power of Three* kept me on the edge of my seat. It takes a special book for me to want to "cheat" and sneak a look at the ending. I am never one for much self-control so I must admit, I looked.) But I still read the whole book. At some points I thought the story was a little disjointed with it flashing back to the girls past. And admittedly, those parts didn't keep my interest as well as the present. Lippman does an excellent job of getting into the high school girls' heads. It's all very believable and some parts had me a little choked up.

To the Power of Three isn't a traditional mystery where the reader can figure out the who, what, where and why. She crafts it so well that while you know the who, you can't begin to guess the road that led to Perri, Josie and Kat's fateful meeting in the girls' restroom. I can't wait to read *What the Dead Know!*

Christa says

This is my fourth Laura Lippman book (all stand-alone novels, not her mystery series), and I came to a realization about them: I like them a lot more while I'm reading them than when I'm done and looking back.

I think that's because her books really hold your interest--I always find myself invested in the characters and looking forward to picking up where I left off. But the climaxes always seem a bit disappointing. After caring so much about the characters, and really enjoying what's going on, the conclusion seems to not quite match up with the buildup.

This book was no exception. I loved the plot--what really went on in a high school bathroom in wealthy suburbia, where the homecoming queen was shot dead and her two best friends, both with varying degrees of injury, found with her? Lippman took us through the foundation of it all, from when the girls were third graders up until their senior year. The story was told through the eyes of many of the players--some very peripheral--which served in giving a well-rounded view of what was actually going on.

But when the mystery was finally revealed, all I could really feel was "ehh." I was definitely expecting something more. But at the same time, I really enjoyed the process of reading it. So even though it's not one I'll think about much afterwards, it was a pleasant reading diversion.

melissa says

This is my first Lippman book and I will definitely be reading more. The story is so well crafted. Three friends found shot in their high school bathroom. It looks like a simple case of jealousy among teen girls but as the years of friendship unravel it's not what it originally seems, but then again, it actually is. I found the ending believable more than shocking. For me, it's not always important to have a *gasp* revelation in the final chapter. I think it's more difficult to slowly flesh out what the reader thinks they already know and make it acceptable rather than exceptional. Lippman does just that; a subtle mention of one thing will resurface chapters later and help to fill in a blank. A small memory from years prior suddenly becomes paramount in a character's present decision. There is a long list of characters yet it never becomes cumbersome, each character is a carefully placed piece of the puzzle. A great read. I am excited to have found this author.

Christie says

To the Power of Three was my first novel by Laura Lippman. It's hard to know what to say about it because while I didn't love it, I certainly appreciated its merits.

To the Power of Three tells the story of Kat, Perri and Josie, childhood best friends. One June morning, one of the three brings a gun to school, shoots two of the girls (one fatally) and then herself. The novel then begins to unravel the story of what would have caused this horrible act of violence.

Lippman is an accomplished writer. In some ways, her work reminds me of Carol Goodman. Lippman's characters were complicated and well drawn – even minor characters have interior lives, hopes and fears. We come to understand these three girls and share their bond through the years of their friendship, but we only come to understand what caused one of the girls to take such drastic measures at the novel's conclusion.

For me, that was the novel's weakness. The book's over 400 pages long – too long, perhaps, for such a mediocre resolution. As a reader, we've invested a great deal in these characters (and their parents and peripheral friends) that it's a let down to discover what actually happened on that fateful day – and why it happened. (After giving this more thought, I think the reason why the ending didn't work for me is because it gives one of the characters a moral compass that – while not exactly coming out of nowhere – doesn't seem earned either.)

To the Power of Three wasn't a page-turner in the way that some mysteries are. Perhaps that balancing act is hard to achieve: literature and suspense; a well-written story that you speed through because you can't bear not to know whodunit. For my money, no one manages that sort of book better than Thomas H. Cook. Still, Lippman's skills are apparent and I'd certainly read her again. In fact, I have *What the Dead Know* waiting on my tbr shelf.

Brenda Boykin says

I liked this one also, not as well as some of the authors other books but it kept me going!

Richard Stephens says

Billed as an addicting and chilling page turner it did not disappoint.

Three girls are shot in a school bathroom before school. one is dead, one is in critical condition and one has minor injuries.

For the Police something doesn't quite add up. How and why did three close friends end up in the bathroom shot? What led to this point?

Bev says

I've come upon yet another book set in my hometown of Baltimore, MD! This one mentions lots of places I know very well, so it makes the story more immediate.

Just finished the book...there are lots of things I love about Laura Lippman's writing, and I will definitely read more of her books, but as I have seen in many of the reviews, this is not her best work. The story started out like gangbusters, and I was very intrigued for about the first 1/3rd of the book, but then the story started to meander and my interest level decreased significantly. As the reader tries to make sense of a shooting of three high-school girls in one of the school bathrooms, clues are released a bit at a time and momentum builds, but then the whole thing starts to fall flat. The ending is a surprise, but it's anti-climactic and ultimately dissatisfying. The book is billed as a mystery, but I did not see enough of the necessary elements for it to fit in that category.

Still want to say "Hooray" for Baltimore's own Laura Lippman, however, ad that I plan to give some of her other books a try.

Lisa H. says

Lippman's freestanding novels are not your standard mysteries. (She has also written a series featuring a PI named Tess Monaghan, of which I've read part of one, that I'm not really interested in pursuing.) Yes, there's been a crime committed, and there usually are police involved, but her writing spends more time digging into the minds of the people involved, and looking at how their histories have led them to be connected to the crime in some way.

I remarked to a friend as I was reading this that it wasn't really *grabbing* me, and it never really did, not in that stay-up-all-night-to-finish way. Yet I couldn't put it down, and not because of my usual compulsion to finish a book no matter how dreadful. (e.g., the James Moore book I read recently, which I can't even justify donating to the library book sale. I don't think ANYONE should have to read it, it's that bad.)

The "Three" of the title are three girls, high school seniors, who met in third grade and have been virtually joined at the hip from then until about a year before the book opens. Before the first chapter closes, one of them is dead, one near death, and the third injured, in superficially straightforward circumstances that nonetheless raise the suspicions of the investigating officer. The story of their trio, what brought and kept them together and what tore them apart, set amid the petty politics found in any high school, is the larger mystery at the heart of the book.

I'm not prone to obsessively looking for clues as I read in order to determine "whodunnit" before the author takes me there, so I can't really say whether I *could have* figured it out if I'd been paying attention that way - I had a pretty good idea where we were headed, but the "reveal" tied up all those annoying loose ends very tidily. And no one lived happily ever after.

Stephanie says

I have to say I found this book to be pretty disappointed. I expected much more. I think the author could have

done a lot more with the story. It had the potential to be really good, but definitely fell short. The book went on for much longer than it needed to. I was interested enough to want to know what happened at the end, and when I finally made it there, I said, "that's it?" I wanted a lot more.

Beth says

Finished in less than 24 hours

Nancy says

Four and three-quarters stars-- one of Lippman's very best.

And not, in any way, a typical police procedural, thriller or cozy, which is probably why other reviewers didn't particularly care for this stand-alone.

Here's what I absolutely loved about this book: Lippman gets three things absolutely right-- young/teenage girls, schools and the way they work, and what life is like in a community of privilege, like the fictional Glendale. The things the girls say to each other, what they worry about, the things they deem important--important enough, it turns out, to kill.

I was enthralled by this book, beginning to end--even though Lippman left a few hanging threads. Having spent 30 years of my life working with teenage girls, in a community with some similarities to Glendale, I found all of it pitch perfect, utterly believable. And I didn't figure it out--or see the surprises coming.

Dora says

So many people have recommended Laura Lippman to me that I was extra disappointed that this book didn't wow me.

I thought the writing style odd at times-- even though it's in the 3rd person, the tone would change dramatically depending on which character it was following (gruff cop, ditzy teenager, etc).

The plot trods along dully, when a murder mystery should have an exciting pace... the big reveal at the end left me feeling like "OK, so that's what happened", not "OH SNAP! THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED!" which is what one wants from such a book. Not to mention the nature of the big reveal is lame too.

The best thing about this book was the way it did successfully capture the complexity of relationships between teenage girls-- and particularly the way things get extra complicated when there are three. That was very well done.

Otherwise... yawn. People love her so I will give her another chance, but I'll first figure out which book of hers people think is best.

Vicky says

I am not usually hooked by mysteries, but this one had such an interesting premise -- an inexplicable shooting involving three girls, best friends, at a suburban highschool-- that I read on. But in the end I was disappointed. The solution seemed contrived, unrelated to the personalities of the characters -- a typical mystery writer's attempt to dig up the **least** likely explanation for an event (so the reader will not be able to guess at it). Lippman threw away a good opportunity here to explore the fairly dark world of contemporary teens.
