



The Library Paradox

Catherine Shaw

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March, 1896. Motherhood and work as a private detective don't easily go hand-in-hand, but Vanessa is determined to give it a try. Being a wife and mother has meant that she's had to give up her beloved teaching job, but Vanessa has been kept busy by a string of requests asking for her help in solving troubling cases. It is not often, though, that her investigations involve violent death . . .

The Library Paradox Details

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Author : Catherine Shaw

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From Reader Review The Library Paradox for online ebook

Teresa Hughes says

This is a very well written and informative book that invites the reader to explore the struggles experienced by the Jewish community at the end of the 19th Century. The only down side being I didn't actually think the main mystery was that mysterious (and I worked it out pretty quickly). It was enjoyable though and I felt I learnt something from reading it.

Marsha says

In my effort to read more mysteries with the word "Library" in the title, I came upon this novel. The author gives us a detective who is not the brilliant, know-everything detective of much recent fiction, but a typical wife and mother in 1896 England. The story brings in elements of the Dreyfus affair, anti-Semitism, a murder in a library, and the uncomfortable world of Hassidic Jews in London's East End at the turn of the last century. The comparison of treatment by the police and courts of non-Jews vs. Jews is well presented and explored. I liked this novel more than I thought I would, even though the answer to the mystery was apparent and foreshadowed long before it was discovered by the main characters. The novel is well-written, moves quickly, and gives us an unusual heroine and story. Recommended for historical mystery lovers.

Linda Gaines says

A different kind of woman detective story, Vanessa studies people who are Jewish and one who is Anti-Semitic. She learns a lot about the religion and the people and finally the mystery is solved. I will have to find some other mysteries in this series.

Lola Et La Vie says

Light read. Not memorable, but enjoyable.

Jeanine says

<https://watleestjeanine.wordpress.com...>

Michelle says

This book is set in London in the late 1800's. It focuses on a amateur female detective, Vanessa Duncan, now married with 2 small children. I didn't realize when I got it that it was part of a series, and is actually the third

book. Nonetheless, it was easy to follow the actual mystery. A professor, who lived in an apartment above the library, was murdered in his study. Witnesses outside heard a struggle and the shot, but found no one inside. Vanessa must find out who might have murdered the man, who was an ardent anti-Semitic. Was it the mysterious elderly Hasidic man, or someone else. Vanessa is aided by a former pupil and her friends, who are Jewish and give her an inside look into the London Jewish community. The Library Paradox is presented which was an actual logical puzzle proposed by Bertrand Russell. In the end, I figured out the outcome, but the reasoning behind it was interesting. I may go back and get the earlier books in the series.

Ice Bear says

We go to London, and France and Eastern European history come to us. The paradox is less mathematical than in previous tales but some insight into Victorian England's foibles is revealed.

Diana Sandberg says

Pretty good. It's the 3rd in a series, read because it was the suggested monthly read for an online reading group I belong to. I found the author's commitment to the device of the narrative in the form of journal entries wavered early on and pretty much disappeared not long after that. Other than chapter headings in the form of dates, there was nothing about the narration that was distinct from any other first-person telling. Otherwise, the tale was enjoyable and intriguing. I liked the theme and setting; the main puzzle was not terribly puzzling, but that's ok, the details were interesting enough. I particularly liked the way that the heroine frequently thought about her babies, with a sweet urgency that I found very evocative. Charming.

Beverly says

Vanessa Weatherburn, wife, mother and amateur detective, is hired to solve the death of Professor Gerald Ralston. He was found shot in his study, which is part of his library. He was a virulent anti-Semite. He was not well liked and the list of suspects is long. The library has only one entry from the outside. The study can be entered from the library and also from the Professor's apartment. The door to his apartment was locked and the key was in the Professor's pocket. So how did the murderer get out without being seen? It is 1896 and the Dreyfus Affair is very much in the news. One of the first people on the scene is a young Jewish man who claims to have seen an elderly Hassidic man leaving the library as he approached. The police logically come to the conclusion that he made this Hassidic man up and is in fact the killer. Vanessa must go deep into the Hassidic community. She struggles to understand the culture and customs of the community to find a way to solve the mystery.

Theo Clarke says

On LibraryThing I wrote: 'A bluestocking Victorian wife and mother chafing gently under the social constraints of Cambridge is invited to investigate the suspicious death of a London academic. Leaving her

children with relatives she comes to Kings College and mingles with academics and Jewry to solve an ingenious mystery in a Victorian London redolent with authenticity. With its clear style and rigorous fair play, this is a rewarding puzzle and a satisfying resolution.'

Debbie says

I like historical fiction and this little mystery takes place in Victorian England. The plot includes historical events like the Dreyfuss affair which I knew little of. I found the anti-semitism of the time disturbing yet revealing. There were parallels to this same topic in another recent read of mine, *The paths between the seas* by McCullough. Mathematics and logic are other themes of interest in this book. All in all a satisfactory read. I know who I want to hand it to next...

Edith H says

The author has done a lot of research for this book, and I really appreciate it, but at the same, I felt she tried to include EVERYTHING she had learnt whether relevant to the plot or not, and it started to annoy me very quickly.

Other than that.. the mystery was alright I guess, quite predictable, and I don't quite understand why they took so long to come to some of the conclusions.

Betty says

This book is interesting in that it is a work of fictional mathematical mystery. That said, it is a murder mystery with a substantial history of the Jewish community, particularly in East London, in the 19th century. Catherine Shaw has done a great deal of research into this time period. Here we have a heroine very much ahead of her time, Vanessa Weatherburn, a young mother of two toddlers who is also an amateur detective. Fans of Anne Perry's Charlotte Pitt series will relate to this character who has an ability to mix and mingle while collecting information.

The Library Paradox is not just the title of the book, it is an actual mathematical paradox concerning a catalogue of catalogues. In this case, the book title also represents the fact that the murder took place in a library and paradoxically no one could have done the crime. The murder victim is a fiercely, almost insanely anti-Semitic professor of high standing. With no witnesses to the actual murder but 3 witnesses to the aftermath and one person on the walkway heading the other direction when the shot was heard, no amount of tests of timing could put any of them on the spot at the exact moment of the shooting. The professor himself had an exceptional number of enemies, and therein lies the dilemma of discovering a suspect.

In the course of events, many real crimes against Jews are mentioned, including the Dreyfus Affair, famous in French history, and it is soon discovered that the professor had a hand in the conviction of two Jews in the "ritual" murder of an 11 year old boy, James Wilson. There are several seemingly unrelated issues throughout the book, but it holds itself together. The segments pertaining to tracking down an elderly rabbi, or rebbe as the Hasidic community refers to him, is quite entertaining in an odd way. Did I like the book?

Yes, I enjoyed it enough that I would read another of Catherine Shaw's books, but I personally felt it was a little dragged out in spots, particularly at the beginning, but it took all my attention once the actual drama began. Still, I recommend it for its adventures into a time and place we do not often hear about, and for a sound and satisfying mystery.

Deanne says

Preferred this method of recounting the story as opposed to the use of letters from Vanessa to Dora. This time Vanessa is in London, trying to track down the killer of a professor, a deeply unpleasant man. There are problems to solve, witnesses to find and suspects to discount.

Brian's Bookshelves says

Boring, flat writing.
Intriguing mystery but fizzled out until I didn't care. Very unsatisfying
1 star. Skimmed the final third.
