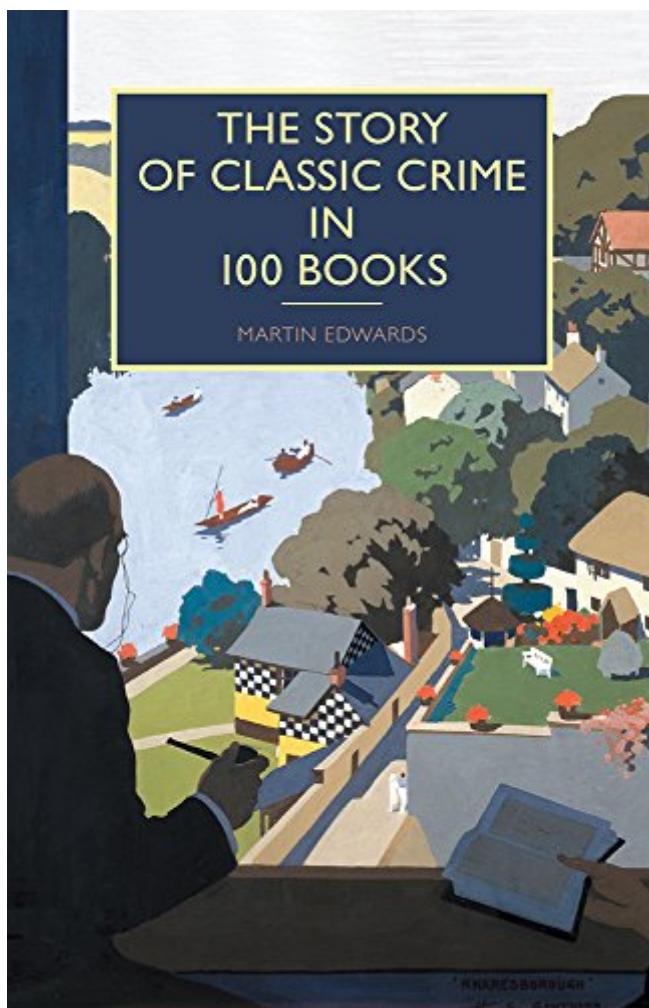


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# The Story Of Classic Crime In 100 Books



## **Synopsis**

This book tells the story of crime fiction published during the first half of the twentieth century. The diversity of this much-loved genre is breathtaking, and so much greater than many critics have suggested. To illustrate this, the leading expert on classic crime discusses one hundred books ranging from *The Hound of the Baskervilles* to *Strangers on a Train* which highlight the entertaining plots, the literary achievements, and the social significance of vintage crime fiction. This book serves as a companion to the acclaimed British Library Crime Classics series but it tells a very diverse story. It presents the development of crime fiction-from Sherlock Holmes to the end of the golden age-in an accessible, informative and engaging style. Readers who enjoy classic crime will make fascinating discoveries and learn about forgotten gems as well as bestselling authors. Even the most widely read connoisseurs will find books (and trivia) with which they are unfamiliar-as well as unexpected choices to debate. Classic crime is a richly varied and deeply pleasurable genre that is enjoying a world-wide renaissance as dozens of neglected novels and stories are resurrected for modern readers to enjoy. The overriding aim of this book is to provide a launch point that enables readers to embark on their own voyages of discovery.

## **Book Information**

File Size: 14292 KB

Print Length: 288 pages

Simultaneous Device Usage: Unlimited

Publisher: Poisoned Pen Press (August 1, 2017)

Publication Date: August 1, 2017

Language: English

ASIN: B072MJYDQR

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #80,736 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #11

inÃ  Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Genres & Styles > Short Stories #56

inÃ  Books > Reference > Encyclopedias & Subject Guides > Literature #85 inÃ  Books >

## Customer Reviews

I received an e-ARC of this book through NetGalley and Poisoned Pen Press. Thank you. The crime stories written during the Golden Age of crime have proven their ability to remain entertaining and even addictive among modern readers of crime fiction. These books are different in many ways from the modern novels but if you look closely you will recognize an aspect in the modern book which mirrors a theme or technique which was once considered brand new. Martin Edwards has once again given me a method for studying the classic crime novel and the authors who paved the way for all the changes which have taken place within the genre. This book confines itself to the first half of the last century, between 1901 and 1950, and is a companion to the series of the British Library's series of crime classics. If you've enjoyed reading any of those reprints, this work will go far toward filling out your knowledge of the authors, titles, and themes which moved the classic crime fiction stories forward as they continued to change and evolve. There is simply too much information in this book to give anything like a list of authors or even a list of book titles. I can tell you that there are twenty-four chapters, each dealing with a different aspect of the novels from miraculous murders (also called impossible murders) to the lure of the countryside, the English manor house, the amateur detective, the educated sleuth, the backlash against politicians and on and on. In each chapter Edwards explains the theme, gives a brief synopsis of the examples of the novels he has chosen to illustrate the theme and a brief biography of the author. Each chapter discusses four or five novels. The book as a whole moves in a more or less chronological order, at least in the easiest way for the format to do that. The book also contains an Introduction, Select Bibliography, Index of Titles, and an Index of Authors which all provide a tremendous amount of detail on the subject. This is a book to savor, a book to keep as a reference guide, a book to help you find authors you aren't familiar with but want to try to track down. Even the most well known authors may have a novel mentioned in this collection which you have missed. I was equally surprised at how many of the authors and stories I was familiar with as well as how many authors I knew nothing about. Even though I initially read this book in digital format I already know I will have to get the print edition so it can go on my shelf of Classic Age crime fiction reference books. How could I resist?

Probably 3.5 stars. Martin Edwards' introduction sets out the limitations of this book. It is a "story" and not a "history". It serves as a companion to the British

Library's Crime Classics series, covering only the first half of the twentieth century. It does not try to define the best books nor is it a selection of his own favourites, being highly selective and not an encyclopaedia. It is unashamedly idiosyncratic and simply a launch point for the reader's voyage of discovery through the waters of classic crime fiction. The book has 24 themed chapters for example "Making Fun of Murder" and "Scientific Enquiries" and runs from "The Hound of the Baskervilles" (1902) to "The 31st of February" and "Strangers on a Train" (1950), although references are made to earlier and later publications. There are also a Select Bibliography and Index of Authors, the latter without page references. Each chapter follows a pattern. First, there is a general survey of the chapter theme, then a summary of the plots (without spoilers) of at least three and up to eleven of the relevant books, each summary ending with a brief biography of the author. Chapter Six, "Serpents in Eden", for example, surveys books set in rural Britain from Wilkie Collins' "The Moonstone" (1868) to Ann Cleeves' Shetland series taking in authors well- and lesser-known such as Agatha Christie and John Ferguson (1871/3-1952). Summarised are "The Secret of High Eldersham" (my least favourite Miles Burton), "Death under Sail" (an early C P Snow), John Bude's "The Sussex Downs Murder" (a good methodical detective yarn) and "Sinister Crag" by Newton Gayle (the pen name of Muna Lee and Maurice Guinness), which I had not encountered before. So a nice mixture of familiar and unfamiliar, the often- read and the to-be-explore. There will be something here for all but the most expert of classic crime buffs. Endless debate will had on which books and authors should/should not have been included. My own particular favourites, E R Punshon and George Bellairs, are mentioned, but only briefly. I did not much enjoy this book, finding the format rather repetitive. It may be that it is better used as a dip-into rather than a read from cover-to-cover. It will certainly appeal to list-addicts and to fans of the British Library series who will find some of the chapter headings familiar. In a lot of ways it read to me rather like a cobbling together of the sort of information found in the introductions to books and stories from the B.L. Crime Classics. Thank you to NetGalley and Poisoned Pen Press for the ARC.

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