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Mystery Series Books I've Enjoyed 6/17/23 PDF

My taste in reading is pretty eclectic. I read best-sellers and non-fiction as well, but I've found my favorite genre is the mystery novel series.

Of course, I've enjoyed the 'Golden Age' of detective fiction: Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, Ngaio Marsh, and P.D. James. I offer you a couple of dozen other terrific authors. I'm not a fan of books about tracking down a serial killer; for me, the hunt for the loony crackpot targeting left-handed red-haired baristas holds no appeal. I prefer mysteries for the puzzles they present. "Qui bono?" (who benefits?) Give me a motive: Money, revenge, the need to preserve a secret, even blind rage about some slight.

I don't usually care for "cozy mysteries" (though you'll find some exceptions mentioned near the bottom of this list) nor those which rely on the occult. I'm not looking for an adrenaline rush. I don't like gratuitous violence, pain or gore (nor the "thrillers" which threaten such), explosions or even guns. That's probably why so many of my favorite mystery novel series are British. I also like having a peek at the similarities and differences of the cultures of the US, parts of Britain and (as you'll see) Venice and Australia.

When the hero of a book is the best in the world at everything, hired only by heads of state or the most

wealthy people in history, flies in the fastest plane, has the ultimate weapons... well you get my drift... I'm not a fan of those books.

In a series of novels, an author has a greater opportunity to develop each of the regular characters over time. Therefore, I suggest you try to read each series in its own order.

I offer you this list of my favorite mystery novel series— over 500 stories by dozens of authors. I've just copied and pasted these lists for you without bothering to match the text formats of the lists. I've sampled many other series of mysteries and felt they did not merit being put on this list of excellent books.

Robert Galbraith - Cormoran Strike Mysteries

In my teens, I was reading P.D. James' *Innocent Blood* and realized I was enjoying the "journey" and being less intent upon arriving at the book's "destination." I feel the same way about this stunning series by J. K. Rowling, published under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith.

Forget about her Harry Potter series, whatever you thought of it. Accept the fanciful name of our main character, Cormoran Strike, who's a British private detective unlike any you've met before. Just like real life, these books aren't about how they end, but about how things evolve in getting there. I've put my other favorite mystery series authors on this page in no particular order, but I've put this Cormoran Strike series at the top because it may be the best of them all.

A couple of things to know in advance: Each book is larger than the book before. Book Six, *The Ink Black Heart*, is over 1000 pages. It was like a double serving of a dish I loved. That sixth book also delves into a world unfamiliar to most of us: video game chatrooms where characters have made-up names and identities. I encourage you to read these in order.

The Cuckoo's Calling (2013)
The Silkworm (2014)
Career of Evil (2015)
Lethal White (2018)
Troubled Blood (2020)
The Ink Black Heart (2022)

Elizabeth George - Inspector Lynley Mysteries

British crime investigation series based around aristocratic, Oxford-educated Detective Inspector Thomas Lynley and his misfit, working-class assistant (my favorite character) Detective Sergeant Barbara Havers. Thanks, Beth, for introducing me to these.

1988: A Great Deliverance
1989: Payment in Blood
1990: Well-Schooled in Murder
1991: A Suitable Vengeance
1992: For the Sake of Elena
1992: Missing Joseph
1993: Playing for the Ashes
1996: In the Presence of the Enemy
1997: Deception on His Mind
1999: In Pursuit of the Proper Sinner
2001: A Traitor to Memory

2003: A Place of Hiding
2005: With No One as Witness
2006: What Came Before He Shot Her
2008: Careless in Red
2010: This Body of Death
2012: Believing The Lie
2013: Just One Evil Act
2014: A Banquet of Consequences
2018: The Punishment She Deserves
2022: Something to Hide

Ann Cleeves - Vera Stanhope Novels

These novels, except for *The Glass Room*, have been dramatized in the television series *Vera* on ITV, which stars Brenda Blethyn in the title role. The programme premiered in May 2011. They take place in and around Tynemouth, in the north of England.

The Crow Trap (1999)
Telling Tales (2005)
Hidden Depths (2007)
Silent Voices (2011)
The Glass Room (2012)
Harbour Street (2014)
The Moth Catcher (2015)
The Seagull (2017)
Frozen (2020)
The Darkest Evening (2020)
The Rising Tide (2022)

Ann Cleeves - Shetland Island Series

More from the author above: In 2013, *Red Bones* was dramatised by David Kane for BBC television as the first episode of the series *Shetland*, which stars Douglas Henshall as Detective Inspector Jimmy Perez. Episodes broadcast in 2014 were based on *Raven Black*, *Dead Water*, and *Blue Lightning*.

Raven Black (2006); Gold Dagger Award
White Nights (2008)
Red Bones (2009)
Blue Lightning (2010)
Dead Water (2013)
Thin Air (2014)
Too Good To Be True (2016, novella)
Cold Earth (2016)
Wild Fire (2018)

Ann Cleeves - Two Rivers Series

More from the author above: In North Devon, where two rivers converge and run into the sea, Detective Matthew Venn is in this new book by Ann Cleeves.

The Long Call (2019)
The Heron's Cry (2021)

Donna Leon - Commissario Guido Brunetti Mysteries

Another absolutely delightful series! These are set in Venice, Italy. The protagonist is a moral cop in a corrupt society. Lots of character development and depth in these.

Death at La Fenice
Death in a Strange Country
Dressed for Death
Death and Judgement
Acqua Alta
Quietly in Their Sleep
A noble Radiance
Fatal Remedies
Friends in High Places
A Sea of Troubles
Wilful Behaviour
Uniform Justice
Doctored Evidence
Blood from a Stone
Through a Glass, Darkly
Suffer the Little Children
The Girl of His Dreams
About Face
A Question of Belief
Drawing Conclusions
Beastly Things
The Golden Egg
By Its Cover
Falling in Love
The Waters of Eternal Youth
Earthly Remains
The Temptation of Forgiveness
Unto Us a Son Is Given
Trace Elements
Transient Desires
Give Unto Others
So Shall You Reap

Michael Connelly - Harry Bosch Novels

Connelly presents fully developed, interesting characters who grow with each novel and his plots continue to entertain. His Harry Bosch (with Renee Ballard) novels sometimes overlap with his (the character's half-brother) Mickey Haller novels. More recently, Connelly has introduced reporter Jack McEvoy and Rachel Walling. The characters overlap in the books. While many series seem to become formulaic over time, Connelly continues to improve.

The Black Echo (1992)
The Black Ice (1993)
The Concrete Blonde (1994)
The Last Coyote (1995)

Trunk Music (1997)
Angels Flight (1999)
A Darkness More Than Night (2001)
City Of Bones (2002)
Lost Light (2003)
The Narrows (2004) (sequel to The Poet)
The Closers (2005)
Echo Park (2006)
The Overlook (2007)
Nine Dragons (2009) (also featuring Mickey Haller)
The Drop (2011)
The Black Box (2012)
The Burning Room (2014)
The Crossing (2015) (also featuring Mickey Haller)
The Wrong Side Of Goodbye (2016) (also featuring Mickey Haller)
Two Kinds Of Truth (2017) (also featuring Mickey Haller)
Dark Sacred Night (2018) (also featuring Renée Ballard)
The Night Fire (2019) (also featuring Renée Ballard)
The Dark Hours (2021) (also featuring Renée Ballard)
Desert Star (2022) (also featuring Renée Ballard)

Michael Connelly - Mickey Haller Novels

The Lincoln Lawyer (2005)
The Brass Verdict (2008)
Nine Dragons (2009)
The Reversal (2010)
The Fifth Witness (2011)
The Gods of Guilt (2013)
The Crossing (2015)
The Night Fire (2019)
The Law of Innocence (2020)

Charles Finch - Charles Lenox Mysteries

Charles Finch writes believable books rich with detail, interesting historical tidbits and some surprising twists. Charles Lenox, our main character, is a high-born amateur detective in Victorian England. (Books below are sequential order, even though they were written out of sequence.)

The Woman in the Water (2018)
The Vanishing Man (2019)
The Last Passenger (2020)
A Beautiful Blue Death (2007)
The September Society (2008)
The Fleet Street Murders (2009)
A Stranger in Mayfair (2010)
A Burial at Sea (2011)
An East End Murder (2011)
A Death in the Small Hours (2012)
An Old Betrayal (2013)

The Laws of Murder (2014)
Home by Nightfall (2015)
The Inheritance (2016)
Gone Before Christmas (2017)
An Extravagant Death (2021)

Robert Dugoni - Tracy Crosswhite Series

Tracy Crosswhite is a homicide detective with the Seattle PD. Tracy used to be a high school science teacher, but decided to join the force after her personal tragedy ignited in her a passion for justice.

The Academy (Tracy Crosswhite #0.1), 2014 (short story)
Third Watch (Tracy Crosswhite #0.5), 2015
My Sister's Grave (Tracy Crosswhite #1), 2014
Her Final Breath (Tracy Crosswhite #2), 2015
In the Clearing (Tracy Crosswhite #3), 2016
The Trapped Girl (Tracy Crosswhite #4), 2017
Close to Home (Tracy Crosswhite #5), 2017
A Steep Price (Tracy Crosswhite #6), 2018
A Cold Trail (Tracy Crosswhite #7), 2020
In Her Tracks (Tracy Crosswhite #8), 2021

Tana French - Dublin Murder Squad series

The New Yorker Magazine said, "The Dublin Murder Squad books are a mystery series in name only; in multiple respects, the series transgresses the well-established conventions of the genre, the first of which is a reliable continuity in tone and dramatis personae." These each have a different protagonist. Some of the characters overlap and may relate to one another, but it's not your average series with a hero, a sidekick, etc. The books are fascinating looks at society, motivations, and philosophies.

In the Woods (Dublin Murder Squad #1), 2007
The Likeness (Dublin Murder Squad #2), 2008
Faithful Place (Dublin Murder Squad #3), 2010
Broken Harbour (Dublin Murder Squad #4), 2012
The Secret Place (Dublin Murder Squad #5), 2014
The Trespasser (Dublin Murder Squad #6), 2016
The Witch Elm (Dublin Murder Squad #7), 2019

Jane Harper - Australian mysteries

These novels set in rural Australia are riveting and exceptionally well written.

Aaron Falk novels:
The Dry, 2016
Force of Nature, 2017
Exiles, 2022

Standalone novels:
The Lost Man, 2018,
The Survivors, 2020,

Elly Griffiths - Ruth Galloway series

Author Domenica de Rosa wrote under her own name until (in her words) she turned to crime. Her character, forensic archaeologist Dr. Ruth Galloway, is in her late thirties. She lives happily alone with her two cats in a bleak, remote area near Norfolk, UK, when she is called by Detective Chief Inspector Nelson to help in an investigation. I don't want to spoil the series too much, but she is a single mom for most of this series.

Ruth Galloway series

The Crossing Places
The Janus Stone
The House at Sea's End
A Room Full of Bones
Ruth's First Christmas Tree
Dying Fall
The Outcast Dead
The Ghost Fields
The Woman in Blue
The Chalk Pit
The Dark Angel
The Stone Circle
The Lantern Men
The Night Hawks
The Locked Room
The Last Remains

Stephens and Mephisto Mystery series

The Zig Zag Girl (2014)
Smoke and Mirrors (2015)
The Blood Card (2016)
The Vanishing Box (2017)
Now You See Them (2019)
The Midnight Hour (2021)
The Great Deceiver (2023)

Harbinder Kaur series

The Stranger Diaries (2018)
The Postscript Murders (2020)[21]
Bleeding Heart Yard (2022)
The Dark Angel

Colin Dexter - Inspector Morse Novels

These thirteen novels inspired the 33 ITV episodes of Inspector Morse. These are wonderful puzzles. Morse is not a likeable guy. He's an arrogant alcoholic who can't get romantic relationships to work and usually treats his sidekick, Lewis, and everyone else with little respect. Even though he gets it entirely backwards a few times, Morse eventually solves murders which would remain unsolved forever.

Last Bus to Woodstock (1975)
Last Seen Wearing (1976)

The Silent World of Nicholas Quinn (1977)
Service of All the Dead (1979)
The Dead of Jericho (1981)
The Riddle of the Third Mile (1983)
The Secret of Annexe 3 (1986)
The Wench is Dead (1989)
The Jewel That Was Ours (1991)
The Way Through the Woods (1992)
The Daughters of Cain (1994)
Death Is Now My Neighbour (1996)
The Remorseful Day (1999)

Louise Penny - Chief Inspector Armand Gamache Mysteries

Our friend Sally Baker introduced me to this series. It's set around the life of Chief Inspector Armand Gamache of Sûreté du Québec, the provincial police force for Quebec. Books in the series have been nominated and received numerous awards. The first book in the series, *Still Life*, was released in 2006 and won the New Blood Dagger award, Arthur Ellis Award, the Dilys Award, 2007 Anthony Award, and the Barry Award. All subsequent novels in the series have won major crime-writing awards in three countries. Many have also made the New York Times Best-Seller List, debuting as high as #1.

Still Life
A Fatal Grace/Dead Cold (same book, different title)
The Cruellest Month
A Rule Against Murder/The Murder Stone (same book, different title),
The Brutal Telling
Bury Your Dead
A Trick of the Light
The Beautiful Mystery
How the Light Gets In
The Long Way Home
The Nature of the Beast
A Great Reckoning
Glass Houses
Kingdom of the Blind
A Better Man
All the Devils are Here
The Madness of Crowds
A World of Curiosities

Tony Hillerman - Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee Mysteries

I read these wonderful mysteries years ago, and our book group has enjoyed them, too. Hillerman's writing is noted for the cultural details he provides about modern-era Native American culture. The novels are set in the Four Corners area of New Mexico and Arizona, sometimes reaching into Colorado and Utah, with occasional forays to big cities.

The Blessing Way (1970)
Dance Hall of the Dead (1973)
Listening Woman (1978)
People of Darkness (1980)

The Dark Wind (1982)
The Ghostway (1984)
Skinwalkers (1986)
A Thief of Time (1988)
Talking God (1989)
Coyote Waits (1990)
Sacred Clowns (1993)
The Fallen Man (1996)
The First Eagle (1998)
Hunting Badger (1999)
The Wailing Wind (2002)
The Sinister Pig (2003)
Skeleton Man (2004)
The Shape Shifter (2006)

Charles Todd - Inspector Rutledge Mysteries

This series is (as the others) wonderfully written, but it has a couple of quirks which set it apart. It takes place around 1920, so there's very little modern convenience/technology, and our hero suffers from post-traumatic stress syndrome ("shell shock"). This manifests itself in the ever-present "ghost" of Hamish MacLeod (an hallucination unseen by others), a young Scots soldier Rutledge was forced to execute on the battlefield for refusing an order.

A Test of Wills (1996)
Wings of Fire (1998)
Search the Dark (1999)
Legacy of the Dead (2000)
Watchers of Time (2001)
A Fearsome Doubt (2002)
A Cold Treachery (2005)
A Long Shadow (2006)
A False Mirror (2007)
A Pale Horse (2008)
A Matter of Justice (2009)
The Red Door (2010)
The Kidnapping (2010)
A Lonely Death (2011)
The Confession (2011)
Proof of Guilt (2013)
Cold Comfort (2013)
Hunting Shadows (2014)
A Fine Summer's Day (2015)
No Shred of Evidence (2016)
Racing the Devil (2017)
The Piper (2017)
The Gatekeeper (2018)
The Black Ascot (2019)
A Divided Loyalty (2020)
A Fatal Lie (2021)
A Game of Fear (2022)

Scott Turow legal novels

Turow's aren't murder mysteries, but beautifully written legal procedurals. The characters and legal maneuvering are all fascinating.

Presumed Innocent (1987)
The Burden of Proof (1990)
Pleading Guilty (1993)
The Laws of Our Fathers (1996)
Personal Injuries (1999)
Reversible Errors (2002)
Limitations (2006)
Innocent (2010)
Identical (2013)
Testimony (2017)
The Last Trial (2020)
Suspect (2022)

Ian Rankin - Inspector Rebus Books

This series of police procedurals takes place over a couple of decades in Scotland. In addition to fine mysteries, we get to meet marvelous characters (all of them flawed - even the villains aren't all bad), and watch many of them evolve over time. In the period covered, technology changes, too, of course. In the early novels, they're dependent upon pay phones and borrowing the use of phones in pubs and other businesses.

Knots and Crosses (1987)
Hide and Seek (1991)
Tooth and Nail (1992)
Strip Jack (1992)
The Black Book (1993)
Mortal Causes (1994)
Let It Bleed (1995)
Black and Blue (1997)
The Hanging Garden (1998)
Dead Souls (1999)
Set in Darkness (2000)
The Falls (2001)
Resurrection Man (2002)
A Question of Blood (2003)
Fleshmarket Alley (2004)
The Naming of the Dead (2006)
Exit Music (2007)
Standing in Another Man's Grave (2012)
Saints of the Shadow Bible (2014)
Even Dogs in the Wild (2016)
Rather Be The Devil (2017)
In A House of Lies (2018)
Other novels by Ian Rankin
Witch Hunt (1993)
Bleeding Hearts (1994)

Blood Hunt (1995)
The Complaints (2009)
The Impossible Dead (2011)
The Flood (1986)
Watchman (1988)
Westwind (1990)
Doors Open (2008)

Alan Bradley - Flavia de Luce Mysteries

I'm not usually a fan of "cozy" mysteries, but Alan Bradley "...has created a wickedly clever and intrepid young sleuth, hailed as "one of the most remarkable creations in recent literature" (USA Today). Now readers can follow the captivating Flavia as she stirs up trouble to solve the most confounding of crimes..."(Goodreads)

The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie
The Weed That Strings the Hangman's Bag
A Red Herring Without Mustard
I Am Half-Sick of Shadows
Speaking from Among the Bones
The Dead in Their Vaulted Arches
The Curious Case of the Copper Corpse
As Chimney Sweepers Come to Dust
Thrice the Brinded Cat Hath Mew'd
The Grave's a Fine and Private Place
The Golden Tresses of the Dead

Garry Disher - The Challis and Destry Novels

Exceptionally well developed characters evolve in this intriguingly complex series of police procedural mysteries set in the the Mornington Peninsula in Southeast Australia, near Melbourne.

The Dragon Man (1999)
Kittyhawk Down (2003)
Snapshot (2005)
Chain of Evidence (2007)
Blood Moon (2009)
Whispering Death (2012)
Signal Loss (2016)

Peter Robinson - Inspector Banks series

A well-developed cast of characters and original, interesting plots. These are centered in Yorkshire, England - just south of where the Vera Stanhope novels (above) take place.

Gallows View (1987)
A Dedicated Man (1988)
A Necessary End (1989)
The Hanging Valley (1989)
Past Reason Hated (1991)
Wednesday's Child (1992)
Dry Bones that Dream (1994) (published in the USA as Final Account)

Innocent Graves (1996)
Dead Right (1997) (published in the USA as Blood at the Root)
In a Dry Season (1999)
Cold is the Grave (2000)
Aftermath (2001)
The Summer that Never Was (2003) (published in the USA as Close to Home)
Playing with Fire (2004)
Strange Affair (2005)
Piece of My Heart (2006)
Friend of the Devil (2007)
All the Colours of Darkness (2008)
Bad Boy (2010)
Watching the Dark (2012)
Children of the Revolution (2013)
Abattoir Blues (2014) (published in the USA as In the Dark Places)
When the Music's Over (2016)
Sleeping in the Ground (2017)

“Ellis Peters” (Edith Pargeter) - The Cadfael Chronicles

I told our friend Sunshine that I was enjoying the series above, and she told me about this series. Brother Cadfael has taken Holy orders only after having experienced life as a soldier in the Crusades. He's an herbalist skilled in observing human nature. It's interesting to have the mysteries set in the 12th century when no one knew about finger prints, DNA, etc, and no one had telephones.

1. A Morbid Taste for Bones (written in 1977, set in 1137)
2. One Corpse Too Many (1979, set in August 1138)
3. Monk's Hood (1980, set in December 1138)
4. Saint Peter's Fair (1981, set in July 1139)
5. The Leper of Saint Giles (1981, set in October 1139)
6. The Virgin in the Ice (1982, set in November 1139)
7. The Sanctuary Sparrow (1983, set in the Spring of 1140)
8. The Devil's Novice (1983, set in September 1140)
9. Dead Man's Ransom (1984, set in February 1141)
10. The Pilgrim of Hate (1984, set in May 1141)
11. An Excellent Mystery (1985, set in August 1141)
12. The Raven in the Foregate (1986, set in December 1141)
13. The Rose Rent (1986, set in June 1142)
14. The Hermit of Eyton Forest (1988, set in October 1142)
15. The Confession of Brother Haluin (1988, set in December 1142)
16. The Heretic's Apprentice (1990, set in June 1143)
17. The Potter's Field (1990, set in August 1143)
18. The Summer of the Danes (1991, set in April 1144)
19. The Holy Thief (1992, set in August 1144)
20. Brother Cadfael's Penance (1994, set in November 1145)

Julia Spencer-Fleming -

The Rev. Clare Fergusson/Russ Van Alstyne series

Spencer-Fleming has won the Agatha Award, Anthony Award, Macavity Awards, Dilys Award, Barry Award (for crime novels), the Nero Award, and Gumshoe Awards. She has also been a finalist for the Edgar Award. Her books feature Clare Fergusson, a retired helicopter pilot turned Episcopal priest and Russ Van Alstyne, a police chief. They are set in Millers Kill, a fictional town in upstate New York.

In the Bleak Midwinter (2002)
A Fountain Filled With Blood (2003)
Out of the Deep I Cry (2004)
To Darkness and To Death (2005)
All Mortal Flesh (2006)
I Shall Not Want (2008)
One Was A Soldier (2011)
Through the Evil Days (2013)
Hid from Our Eyes (2020)

William Kent Krueger - Cork O'Connor series

Part Irish, part Anishinaabe Indian, Corcoran "Cork" O'Connor is the former sheriff of Aurora, Minnesota. This is another author our friend Beth introduced me to. Real page-turners.

IRON LAKE
BOUNDARY WATERS
PURGATORY RIDGE
BLOOD HOLLOW
MERCY FALLS
COPPER RIVER
THUNDER BAY
RED KNIFE
HEAVEN'S KEEP
VERMILION DRIFT
NORTHWEST ANGLE
TRICKSTER'S POINT
TAMARACK COUNTY
WINDIGO ISLAND

Kate Atkinson - Jackson Brodie Mysteries

After I posted a link to this page on Facebook, our friend and former Sebastopol Library Director Sue Struthers suggested this series. (Sue said some in her book group didn't care for them. Maybe they're not mystery fans.)

Case Histories (2004)
One Good Turn (2006)
When Will There Be Good News? (2008)
Started Early, Took My Dog (2010)

Jefferson Bass - Body Farm Novels

Finding myself almost bookless before a weekend library closure, I randomly grabbed one of Jefferson Bass's Body Farm Novels. Turns out the author's nom de plume is a combination of two names. Dr. Bill Bass is a world-renowned forensic anthropologist, and Jon Jefferson is a writer. Together they've put together some pretty off-beat, entertaining mysteries.

Carved in Bone. William Morrow. 2006.
Flesh and Bone. William Morrow. 2007.
The Devil's Bones. William Morrow. 2008.
Bones of Betrayal. William Morrow. 2009.
The Bone Thief. William Morrow. 2010.
The Bone Yard. William Morrow. 2011.
The Inquisitor's Key. William Morrow. May 2012.
Cut to the Bone. William Morrow. September 2013.

M. C. Beaton – Hamish Macbeth Novels

This series is the closest my taste goes towards "cozy" mysteries, which are usually not at all to my liking. (TV series of this author's work are quite silly.) Let's just say these short books are a bit light, but still complex enough and well written. Hamish Macbeth is a village bobby in the far north of Scotland and his ambition is to stay that way. His maverick methods, highland intuition, and ways with the village folks solve murders, risking his getting promoted out of his beloved village.

Death of a Gossip (1985)
Death of a Cad (1987)
Death of an Outsider (1988)
Death of a Perfect Wife (1989)
Death of a Hussy (1990)
Death of a Snob (1992)
Death of a Prankster (1992)
Death of a Glutton (1993)
Death of a Travelling Man (1993)
Death of a Charming Man (1994)
Death of a Nag (1995)
Death of a Macho Man (1996)
Death of a Dentist (1997)
Death of a Scriptwriter (1998)
Death of an Addict (1999)
A Highland Christmas (1999)
Death of a Dustman (2001)
Death of a Celebrity (2002)
Death of a Village (2003)
Death of a Poison Pen (2004)
Death of a Bore (2005)
Death of a Dreamer (2006)
Death of a Maid (2007)
Death of a Gentle Lady (2008)
Death of a Witch (2009)
Death of a Valentine (2010)
Death of a Chimney Sweep (2011)

Death of a Kingfisher (2012)
Death of Yesterday (2013)
Death of a Policeman (2014)
Death of a Liar (2015)
Knock, Knock, You're Dead (2016)
Death of a Nurse (2016)
Death of a Ghost (2017)
Death of an Honest Man (2018)

Archer Mayor – Joe Gunther Mysteries

Joe Gunther is the hero of Archer Mayor's long-running mystery novel series set largely in Brattleboro, Vermont. When the series begins, Gunther has already worked as a police officer for 30 years and is an experienced police lieutenant, eventually working for the fictitious Vermont Bureau Of Investigation (VBI). He is a Korean War veteran and a widower. The writing is excellent and the truth is often a surprise.

Open Season (1988)
Borderlines (1990)
Scent Of Evil (1991)
The Skeleton's Knee (1992)
Fruits Of the Poisonous Tree (1993)
The Dark Root (1994)
The Ragman's Memory (1995)
Bellows Falls (1996)
The Disposable Man (1997)
Occam's Razor (1999)
The Marble Mask (2000)
Tucker Peak (2001)
The Sniper's Wife (2002)
Gatekeeper (2003)
The Surrogate Thief (2004)
St. Albans Fire (2005)
The Second Mouse (2006)
Chat (2007)
The Catch (2008)
The Price of Malice (2009)
Red Herring (2010)
Tag Man (2011)
Paradise City (2012)
Three Can Keep a Secret (2013)
Proof Positive (2014)
The Company She Kept (2015)*
Presumption of Guilt (2016)
Trace (2017)
Bury the Lead (2018)
Bomber's Moon (2019)
The Orphan's Guilt (2020)
Marked Man (2021)

Ruth Rendell – Inspector Wexford Novels

Chief Inspector Reginald “Reg” Wexford is the lead character in this very popular series of police procedurals. Each one is a good read, with many very surprising endings.

From Doon with Death (1964)
A New Lease of Death (1967)
(known as Sins of the fathers in the US)
Wolf to the Slaughter (1968)
The Best Man to Die (1969)
A Guilty Thing Surprised (1970)
No More Dying Then (1971)
Murder Being Done Once (1972)
(known as Murder being once done in the US)
Some Lie And Some Die (1973)
Shake Hands Forever (1975)
A Sleeping Life (1978)
Put on By Cunning (1981)
(known as Death notes in the US)
The Speaker of Mandarin (1983)
An Unkindness of Ravens (1985)
The Veiled One (1988)
Kissing the Gunner’s Daughter (1992)
Simisola (1994)
Road Rage (1997)
Harm Done (1999)
The Babes in the Wood (2002)
End in Tears (2005)
Not in the Flesh (2007)
The Monster in the Box (2009)
The Vault (2011)
No Man’s Nightingale (2013)

Below are five series which don’t fall into my usual taste in crime novels.

The marvelous Thursday Murder Club books each gave me great surprises and a good many laughs. Yes, they fall into the “cozy mystery” category which I usually can’t stand, but his witty writing, knack for twisted plots and richly depicted characters made me a big fan.

I had previously kept the Shardlake series off of this list because of its numerous explicit descriptions of violence and brutality. There; you’ve been warned. You can skim over those parts and enjoy the rest of these very well written large tomes about the time of the reign of King Henry VIII.

The Bryant and May series has some serial killers, where I would rather be trying to figure out motive, means and opportunity for a single perpetrator. Some of the points of logic just don’t hold together in this series either, which usually disqualifies a series for me, but they’re supposed to be recollection of a rather batty old guy, so that works. Again, the writing is so good I had to include this series. Finally, there are two very humorous series about burglars. You might leaven your reading of serious crime novels by reading these intermittently.

Richard Osman - The Thursday Murder Club Series

Four residents of an up-scale retirement community who meet weekly to sift through cold cases find themselves immersed in an actual murder investigation.

The Thursday Murder Club
The Man Who Died Twice
The Bullet That Missed

C. J. Sansom – Matthew Shardlake Series

The Shardlake series is a series of historical mystery novels set in the 16th century during the reign of Henry VIII.

Dissolution
Dark Fire
Sovereign
Revelation
Heartstone
Lamentation
Tombland

Christopher Fowler – Bryant & May: Peculiar Crimes Unit Books

Edgy, suspenseful, and darkly comic, this riveting mystery series stars two cranky but brilliant old detectives whose lifelong friendship was forged solving crimes for the London Police Department's Peculiar Crimes Unit.

Full Dark House
The Water Room
Seventy-Seven Clocks
Ten Second Staircase
White Corridor
The Victoria Vanishes
Bryant & May on the Loose
Off the Rails
The Memory of Blood
The Invisible Code
The Bleeding Heart
The Secret Santa
The Burning Man
Strange Tide
Wild Chamber
Hall of Mirrors
The Lonely Hour
England's Finest
Oranges and Lemons
London Bridge Is Falling Down

Comedy crime books (believe it or not!)

Both of the authors below have given me many chuckles and several guffaws.

Donald E. Westlake - John Dortmunder novels

The Hot Rock. 1970.
Bank Shot. 1972.
Jimmy the Kid. 1974.
Nobody's Perfect. 1977.
Why Me? 1983.
Good Behavior. 1985.
Drowned Hopes. 1990.
Don't Ask. 1993.
What's the Worst That Could Happen? 1996.
Bad News. 2001.
The Road to Ruin. 2004.
Watch Your Back! 2005.
What's So Funny? 2007.
Get Real. 2009.

Lawrence Block - Bernie Rhodenbarr novels

Burglars Can't Be Choosers (1977)
The Burglar in the Closet (1978)
The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling (1979)
The Burglar Who Studied Spinoza (1980)
The Burglar Who Painted Like Mondrian (1983)
The Burglar Who Traded Ted Williams (1994)
The Burglar Who Thought He Was Bogart (1995)
The Burglar in the Library (1997)
The Burglar in the Rye (1999)
The Burglar on the Prowl (2004)
The Burglar Who Counted the Spoons (2013)

Incidentally, the image at the top of this page is from my turning an image of the Oberlausitzische Library of Science, in Görlitz, Germany into an infinity of books with my computer in the middle.

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