



The Riverside Villas Murder

Kingsley Amis

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A classic armchair mystery, THE RIVERSIDE VILLAS MURDER has for its hero a 14-year-old boy, Peter Furneaux.

Like all 14 year olds he is hovering hopefully on the brink between sexual inexperience and initiation, and in this book, under our very eyes, Peter suddenly becomes an adult!

A crime, truly murderous, is committed by an unknown and almost unidentifiable assailant. Only Peter begins to guess at the truth--a dangerous truth--which leads him to the river bank by moonlight. A delightful book, and as with all works by Kingsley Amis, guaranteed to please.

The Riverside Villas Murder Details

Date : Published 1973 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

ISBN : 9780140071955

Author : Kingsley Amis

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Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Crime, Novels, Literature, 20th Century

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From Reader Review The Riverside Villas Murder for online ebook

Jay Maxfield says

This is the only Kingsley Amis book I have read - I read it because I like to vary my hobby of reading Golden Age Classical Crimes (1919-1939) with novels of a later date that incorporate the classical crime ethos. The story essentially can be divided into two parts - that of the whodunnit crime that mostly falls in line with classical crime writing of the 1930s (the book was published in 1973 but the setting is around mid 1930s) - and the story of Peter Furneaux a 14 year old caught up in the crime right from the beginning & his subsequent interest investigating the crime - however Peter's story incorporates how adolescents were treated in the 1930s and his sexual awakenings and is as much a part of the story as the crime. Although the story is adventurous in terms of it's dealing with adolescent sex which I should imagine in 1973 was a topic not much discussed and very much hidden under the carpet - the combination of subjects in this novel didn't or weren't made to sit comfortably together making the novel very disjointed and uncomfortable to read. Amis can obviously write well - the novel flows and is easy to read and he knows how to use humour which is always a plus for me. However this experiment using a boy's sexual exploration (in many guises) and a classic crime novel simply didn't work because as Amis oscillates between the two themes he very easily confuses & loses the reader - and making one think - what is this novel really about? I would give this book 5 out of 10.

Manny says

You know those tiresome books where there's a murder, the police are baffled, and some intrepid 14 year old boy solves the case? The problem, of course, is the psychology. 14 year old boys are mostly interested in sex. They spend their time dreaming of girls. Since they can't usually get any, they make do with masturbation, either on their own or with each other. Young teen detective novels never, ever acknowledge these elementary facts, and hence come across as completely out of touch with reality.

Well... there are some rare exceptions. Like *The Riverside Villas Murder*, for instance. I'm not completely sure I recommend it, but there's no doubt that it's different!

Melanie Vidrine says

I enjoyed the very British-ness of this murder mystery, but hard to believe it was published in early '70's; very dated attitudes and words. Must have been written long before publication.

Marti says

Peter Furneaux is a 14 year old boy struggling with growing up--trying to get a date, masturbating, having an affair with an older woman. The murdered man is someone whom Peter and his parents know. One of his acquaintances invites him over for an incredibly large tea. There is a strange incident in the night which may involve the murderer. This is taking place in the 1930s. At first, I thought that it was taking place abroad, but it is set in England.

DreamingSpiresBecca says

Definitely no Lucky Jim. The motive is weak and the clues aren't really clues. It lacks the suspense of a typical whodunit. I did enjoy all the high tea descriptions, and was constantly hungry when reading the book. what was really striking was how the main character changes and matures with the events around him. A totally different boy closes the novel than the one that opens it.

Richard says

As thoroughly readable as you would expect from a Kingsley Amis novel but don't expect to be puzzled by the 'mystery' - the solution's pretty obvious. I've read several detection novels by non genre writers recently: this, The Red House Mystery by A A Milne and Murder at School by John Hilton. They share the same strengths and weaknesses. They are all entertaining reads but with disappointly solvable mysteries. Still, you can't have everything!

Sofiya says

An unusual mystery because it focuses much more on people than the mystery, which seems almost an afterthought. The ending, though, while simple, raises baffling moral questions which are disgustingly relevant still. The Colonel, being affected by indiscretions in his past, sympathises with both the victim of pedophilia and the pedophile, preferring to make the latter commit suicide. This is to avoid bringing the sexual relations between the murderer and the 14yo boy into public knowledge, thereby ruining the boy's life.

Such a choice outlines a hard dichotomy between justice (as defined by society) and compassion. The eventual choice may even have been a sad sort of compromise for justice, since the case was not strong by the Colonel's own admission.

The book is also very heavily male, possibly due to its era. The women in it are portrayed as unengaging, disinterested - and uninteresting -(Daphne), weakly feminine (Peter's mother) or as wicked seductresses-murderers (Mrs Trevelyan). This is not a good selection for the three most prominent women, whereas the prominent men are smart and resourceful (Peter), honest and good fathers (Captain Furneaux), victims (Mr Inman), or clever detectives (albeit reformed pedophiles - Colonel Manton).

Overall it was a departure from usual cut and dried mystery novels, which tend to lack in the personal point of view so as not to give much away. An enjoyable read.

Kelly says

Another one of Amis's flirtations with genre, his high lit mind gives unusual weight to an otherwise pedestrian potboiler plot. I would be interested to read some scholarship on the bold pedophilic questions raised by the story, but it seems unlikely that this one has been given the serious academic treatment. One of

those books that makes you wish their was a half-star option on this site, as it's actually somewhere between a three and a four.

Bill says

This was a very entertaining book. Besides being a well-crafted mystery with interesting characters; I particularly liked Peter and the Colonel, there were some surprising bits as well; not what I expected in this story. While not graphic, there were sexual inferences that surprised me. I won't go into them as you should be surprised (titillated?) as well. This is the second Kingsley Amis novel for me; I'd previously read The Green Man and enjoyed that as well. I much preferred this story though and readily recommend it to anyone who likes a good mystery.

Bert says

I couldn't wait to get my hands on this book after reading a gushing recommendation from Bell Hooks. Heh, not really. All the usual Amis twatishness is present here, though in this case wrapped up in a quite delightful suburban murder mystery. Lots of wanking.

Lynn says

This was a bad mystery story that wasn't interesting. It was also unclear to me when this books was even supposed to be set - did it take place in the 1940's, or was everyone just preoccupied with and stuck in 1930's and 40's cultural trends? The worst thing about this book, though, was the heavy focus on sex and especially the sexually precocious protagonist, 14-year-old Peter. The fact that he's only 14, and in the course of the story it is stressed that he does not look old for his age (he can't pass for 16 to buy cigarettes) he loses his virginity to a full grown married woman; it was gross. All the wink-wink-nudge stuff about homosexuality, and the boys having sex together was prurient and gratuitous as well.

Graeme Roberts says

What a lovely little murder, set in the suburbs of Surrey, England in the 1930s. Literary in style and its lack of research into police procedure, it outdoes Agatha Christie in every way, including its salacious content. If only Agatha had referred frequently but obliquely to homosexuality, mutual masturbation, and rampant adultery with such finesse, and if only fourteen-year-old boys in those days had known about them. Jolly good!

Smiffie says

I really didn't like this at all. This is a book which clearly shows the distance we have travelled regarding

attitudes to women and children. The plot was boring and the murderer was obvious very early on. I didn't think Peter was well written at all, he didn't speak like a young teenager and he wasn't treated like a teenager by the adults around him. There wasn't one likeable character in this book, and I couldn't wait to finish it.

Vishnu says

2.5

Clearly, early Amis is rather amiss except his debut novel. I expect he aged like wine as one of his last works is said to be one of his best. Need to find it within to stick with him until then.

Aaron says

Always a pleasure to read Amis. Not sure why he wrote this, but it is a basic mystery with Amis-like twists and intriguing characters. Set in 1930's Britain, he takes his shots at British society and uses a boy's coming of age to tell a story of sexual growth and maturity wrapped in a basic mystery.
