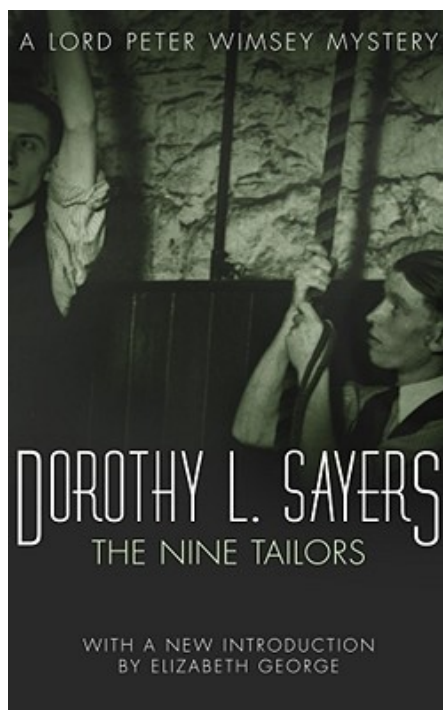




The Nine Tailors

Dorothy L. Sayers

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When a disfigured corpse is discovered in a country parish, the local rector pleads with Lord Peter to take on what will become one of his most brilliant and complicated cases.

The Nine Tailors Details

Date : Published October 1st 1989 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt P (first published 1934)

ISBN : 9780151658978

Author : Dorothy L. Sayers

Format : Hardcover 397 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Classics

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From Reader Review The Nine Tailors for online ebook

Madeline says

1001 Books You Must Read Before You Die, in its infinite wisdom, has seen fit to make this book one of two Dorothy Sayers mysteries that you absolutely have to read or you are illiterate. I still say that Strong Poison should have made the list, but the good people at The List Inc. haven't ever listened to my suggestions and certainly aren't going to start now. That being said, *The Nine Tailors* is still a delightful addition to Lord Peter Wimsey's collection of exploits.

The thing I love about Dorothy Sayers, and the reason I now like her more than Agatha Christie, is because I always learn something from her novels. In this book, the lesson of the day is the art of bellringing. (in fact the title doesn't refer to literal tailors at all; "nine tailors" are the nine bell strokes rung to announce a death) If you think bellringing is a simple act, you will find out exactly how wrong you are by the third chapter. If you acknowledge that bellringing is probably more interesting than it sounds, you will *still* learn what an understatement that is.

It needs to be admitted here that, having finished the book, I still don't really understand all the bellringer shop-talk that goes on in the novel. The problem is that Lord Peter is actually a practiced bellringer already (because there is nothing Lord Peter cannot do), so there's never a need for any of the characters to really explain things. So conversations about bellringing go more like, "Okay, we're going to do this this and this, got that?" "Of course I do, and are we going to whatsit the thingamabob with the whangdoodle?" and I'm sitting there reading all of this and feeling like I missed something important.

But luckily, a deep understanding of bells isn't vital to understanding the greater mystery - which is awesome, by the way, and involves stolen emeralds. Also this is the first Sayers mystery I've read where the murder occurs *after* the book starts, which was cool.

Benjamin says

I picked this one up because the adult education group at my Church read it before its June meeting. I could not make the meeting, but decided that I would read it anyway. This is a classic English detective novel; it takes place in a small town in the country, the detective comes to town by chance and a dead body shows up (sort of), and we discover the dark secrets that are kept by the villagers. However, given that it was written by Sayers, I would say that there is more to this book than just the mystery. The reader is asked to determine if solving a mystery is really worth it, if it causes more pain and strife than the murder itself. Overall, an entertaining read, and I wish I had been able to make the meeting.

As I am sure some other reviewers have noted, change ringing plays a role in the book. It is more of an underlying setting, so knowledge of change ringing is not necessary to enjoy the book. I have none, and I was able to move past it. I suggest reading the first chapter or two, and then reading the change ringing article on Wikipedia, and watching some videos of people change ringing on YouTube. That will give you all the background you need to understand what is going on.

Jane says

[which comes in the very last few pages of the book through sheer happenstance and not because of Wimsey's Great Brain. Is this cheating? Did we, the readers, really have all the clues in front of us? Lots of hints, maybe, of the you-better-not-anger-the-b

Sandy *The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice* says

This is not my favourite Lord Peter mystery.

There was a lot about bells, most of which went right over my head! I tended to skip the combinations for the ringing of the bells and also the very lengthy procedure taken to break the cypher. Other than that, it was a good read which could have been improved by not quite so much of the bell-ringing paraphernalia. I like to learn about things, but here I think Sayers went a bit overboard.

Lord Peter and Bunter find themselves marooned in a Fens village following a motor accident. Rescued by the Rector, they learn of a mystery involving stolen Emeralds which piques Lord Peter's interest and sets him on the very convoluted trail of the thief.

Laura says

Dorothy L Sayers' dramatisation with Ian Carmichael. Another interesting BBC dramatization.

Free download available at [Faded Page](#).

Melanti says

My grandfather was a pastor of a small rural church when I was young. I only have vague memories of his sermons during but I vividly remember walking to church on Sunday mornings to the sound of those bells ringing.

I don't attend church these days, but I still listen out for the sound of church bells - and unfortunately, the churches nearest my place all use that pre-recorded junk piped out of tinny speakers. None of them ring for anything other than keeping time. Which is a good thing, I suppose, with as awful as they sound!

So, on top of the standard excellent mystery and great humor of this series, Sayers also managed to evoke all those memories of a little country church and it's beautiful sounding bells.

There might be a bit too much technical details about ringing the bells for some people's tastes, but with as many wonderful memories as it brought back to me, I loved it.

Jaline says

Dorothy L. Sayers has done it again. Written in 1934, this 11th novel in the Lord Peter Wimsey series shines a light on another topic that I knew nothing at all about. Campanology. The word itself is mysterious, and so is its subject. Campanology is the study of bells, of change-ringing specifically, which adheres to mathematically precise ways in which the bells are rung.

In our story, it is New Year's Eve and Fenchurch St. Paul's is attempting to ring 15,840 Kent Treble Bob Majors to match an 1868 feat accomplished in a college church with only 8 men to ring the 8 bells. It will take 9 hours to accomplish and they planned to have 12 ringers so some could fill in while others took a break. Unfortunately, influenza has visited the village and laid low so many of the ringers.

Lord Peter Wimsey and "his man", Bunter, end up in a ditch about a mile from the village and seek help at the rectory. Lord Peter had experience change-ringing in his own college years and when one of the eight ringers was also laid low with the flu, Lord Peter is asked to help. In his discussions with the rector, we learn about Stedmans, Grandsire Triples, and other mathematical "changes" that have been developed over the years. I was captivated.

And yes, there is a body. One that has been rendered unrecognizable and with no obvious means of death as all injuries to the body were done post-mortem. The man is buried at Fenchurch St. Paul's, for it is a commitment that the village perform such service for any strangers who die unclaimed in their midst.

Tailor Paul is the deep, sonorous bell that tolls the passing of souls in the village. These are rung in groups of three: there are 6 rings for women, followed by a note for each year of their life. Men receive 9 rings, followed by a note for each year of their life. Thus, "The Nine Tailors" are rung for this man who ended up dead in their village. The notes for the years of his life had to be guessed.

The book's format itself is like one of the forms of bell ringing. A numerical sequence for bell changes also becomes part of a cryptogram that helps to solve a mystery that Lord Peter suspects is connected to the dead man. The unfolding of this book is a work of genius, and I thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it. This novel would serve as a stand-alone as there is little reliance on Lord Peter's history.

If you read no other Dorothy L. Sayers novel, this would be a great example of her brilliance as a writer and an intellect. The combination of the two is never compromised, yet she writes in a way that can be understood by the lay person as well. I highly recommend this fascinating novel.

Heather says

I'm having a terrible time writing this review. OK -- yes, there's a mystery and it's an interesting mystery. Yes, it's just as improbable as most of Sayers' other mysteries. Yes, the writing is gorgeous. Yes, it's literary and elliptical. And all of that is really good.

I think, though, that *The Nine Tailors* was something more -- I think it was DS's meditation on the divine, or if it wasn't intentionally, I think that's what she did without knowing it. The whole cast of characters is there, right out of a traditional English country house mystery: the kindly rector, his practical wife, the prophetic old guy who says impenetrable things, the faintly embarrassed aristocrat filling his pew for the sake of duty, the devout peasant couple, and so on. And then what elevates the stereotypes and makes them more profound are the bells -- awe-inspiring and deadly and benevolent and timeless and gentle and melodic and

cacophonous, sensible and insensible and kind and rational and incoherent. And in one way or another, everyone ends up serving the bells or indebted to them or punished by them -- although not worshipping them, I don't think Sayers was being idolatrous. And then there's this terrible, glorious apocalyptic ending, all with the painted angels singing over head.

And there's a body and stolen jewels and a comic bit with a cowardly thief and Bunter goes around being Bunter. There's not a lot of action and there's lots of incomprehensible stuff about change ringing and a code that is absurd. But ultimately I think this is a book about the relationship between God and humanity. Sayers' used all the cliches and came up with something greater than the sum of the parts. It's impressive and moving.

Dagný says

This book is a blast, all nine bells going! The writing is energetic and in command of the craft as if a showcase of bell ringing. While a murder mystery, it is an exposition of English Church Bell ringing, chiming over the English Marshland (Fens) and the English society. This is accomplished with adroit intricacy, immersion and humor. The book, written in the early thirties feels utterly modern. The main character has no description of himself in this book, nor do any other characters, yet they all are incredibly alive with their words and actions; all the while the conversations are clipped to their essence and actions to their relevance. The chapters also use leitmotifs from church bell ringing expositions. While I read this book I felt strangely spellbound by it, transfixed by the unexpected modernity of the style and the fascinating (lost) times it describes. Church bell ringing will not sound the same hereafter.

Grace says

THE BELLS! THE BELLS! OH GOD, THE BELLS....

There are bells in this story. Big bells, little bells, people who know how to ring bells on a professional level, the politics of bell-ringing, bells who sometimes attack their ringers, endurance tests of bell-ringing, history of bells, bells bells bells, it's stopped even being a word now and is just a noise. "Bell". Meaningless.

That is how I felt when putting down this book. I assume that a bell-ringer would go into spasms of delight while reading The Nine Tailors, because someone has finally written a book targeted right at them. That said, the ratio of bell-ringer to average citizen is fairly low, and so if you are picking this book up as a civilian, either be prepared for many many many bells, or move on to another Sayers. Maybe that one with the advertising agency, because I really liked that one.

There's a mystery in here that's pretty solid, except I figured out who the killer was AGES before Wimsey did, and that's just disgraceful because almost everyone in that church should've been able to figure it out just based on their life experience. Ridiculous.

Bell fetishists, have at it. Lovers of mystery novels... at your own risk.

Krissa says

[borrowed from the kate]

I started to eyeball Kate's review and I can't, because I'll probably just say what she says! But here are some thoughts unfiltered.

First, okay, there was a lot about bells. Let's say, if you're not interested in learning a lot of important information about the incredibly archane field of change-ringing, put the book down and back away slowly. Then again, if you're not interested in learning something new when you read, you should probably just got watch COPS.

Secondly, one of my favorite things about Nine Tailors was that there were really two crimes woven together expertly, which is like Mystery Novels 202, for sophomores, because the two incidents, 30 years apart, are both really critical to each other and inform each other.

Thirdly, Peter Wimsey is on fine form in this book - his, well, Bertie-Woosterness is kept JUST in check before it gets a little too over the top, unlike Clouds of Witness where his WHAT-HO! of it all was a bit much for me.

And fourthly, it's just a spectacularly written novel. Set in the Fen country, Sayers paints the bleakest and greyest of landscapes and touches that up every few pages with some tiny detail of a roadside or the sharp bite of inclement weather or the hardened lives of the villagers. Really, she's writing beyond mystery to an England she knows very well.

But, well, there's a lot about bells. I'm taking a star away on account of how confused I got about the damn bells. What's a SALLIE! I still don't know.

Katie says

This one I had trouble getting into because I was confused! See, I thought it was a novel, and then I opened the book and it said, "Changes Rung on an Old Theme in Two Short Touches and Two Full Peals," so I thought . . . ummmm, two short stories and two novellas then? So I read the first "short touch" thinking it was a short story and it was a very odd short story with lots about church bells and no mystery at all!

It was only after I turned a few pages that I realized this was indeed a novel!

Eventually, I did get more into it. It was one of the better ones in terms of one book characters. I really got invested in the village and the people there. But! I was ahead of Peter at one point (view spoiler) and that was a disappointment. (I like being smarter than some characters, but not Peter!) And it's one where Sayers goes into more detail than is fully needed. (And yet no concrete enough detail. I don't have a full understanding of the bells.)

I may have also been too impatient for Gaudy Night to fully appreciate this one. COME BACK TO ME, HARRIET! (But first--I must move.)

Maria Thomarey says

?να εξαιρετικο υπ?δειγμα για ?σους θ?λουν να γρ?ψουν για αλλα πρ?γματα χρησιμοποι?ντας μια

αστυνομική ιστορία . Πρέπει να το διαβάσουν για να δουν ότι όταν γράψουμε ένα αστυνομικό βιβλίο στο κέντρο του βιβλίου πρέπει να βρίσκεται το γκλήμα. Ήτσι λοιπόν σε αυτό το μικρό διαμντι Εδ? έχουμε τη δυνατότητα να μάθουμε πέρα πολλ? πράγματα για τις καμπ?νες,για την τεχνική των κωδωνοκρουσιών, Για την αγγλικ? επαρχ?α για το περ?εργο χιο?μορ των εγγλ?ζων και π?νω απ'όλα Για τον φοβερ? τρ?πο που λειτουργο?ν οι κοιν?τητες τους – τρ?πος που τους βοηθ?σει π?ρα πολ? στο δε?τερο παγκ?σμιο π?λεμο -Η συγγραφέας δε χ?νει ποτ? το στ?χο. Δεν πα?ει ποτ? να λ?νει το α?νιγμα το οπο?ο θ?τει στο κ?ντρο της πλοκ?ς.

Readathon2017:26/26 ένα βιβλίο με αριθμ? στο τ?τλο του

Elizabeth (Alaska) says

Perhaps a Dorothy Sayers was what I needed just now, but I'm not sure this was it. There was a *lot* of technical stuff about change ringing church bells - excerpts from various books on the subject. For example, after a list of numbers, meaning the order in which the bells are to be rung is:

Out of the hunt, middle, in and out at 5, right, middle, wrong, right, middle and into the hunt (4 times repeated).

and

Out of the hunt, wrong, right, middle, wrong, right, in and out at 5, wrong and into the hunt (4 times repeated.)

I not only didn't have a clue what any of this meant, I didn't care. But then it didn't seem as if it mattered that I understood - or maybe it did matter and I missed something along the way.

The story about the murder was good enough. However, it wasn't much of a mystery - and I'm terrible at guessing these things, so it must have been as plain as the nose on my face. I do love Bunter. I think it absolutely amazing that Sayers can provide such a good characterization of someone whose primary dialog is "Very good, my lord."

This filled some waiting time, even in a somewhat noisy situation, and that is what I needed. It might be better than my 3 stars, but I doubt it.

Mary says

An engaging mystery set in Fenchurch St Paul.

Wonderful characters and descriptions of the Church and the art of change ringing.

Beautifully written in the Golden age of crime era.

So of its time.

An engrossing brilliant story.

Will be looking out for more.

A re- read for me!

Nikki says

The Nine Tailors is a book I think about fondly, although I can't quite think of why. Some of it is the atmosphere, I think: the Englishness of this little village in the Fens, and the music of the bells woven all through the story — or, not music exactly, but the complex mathematical patterns of British bell-ringing. In a way, that's how this mystery feels, too: it's complex, with several mistaken identities and a long unsolved mystery. It's also a sad one, because a family gets shattered through almost no fault of their own.

And the Reverend and his household are dear characters, of course.

The audio adaptation is pretty good, managing to make all the complex threads come together well. Ian Carmichael's voice acting is great most of the time, though maybe a trifle overblown during the scene in the belfry. I guess it's difficult to portray that scene without Peter constantly vocalising, though.

Originally posted here.

BrokenTune says

Toll-toll-toll; and a pause; toll-toll-toll; and a pause; toll-toll-toll; the nine tailors, or teller-strokes, that mark the passing of a man. The year is dead; toll him out with twelve strokes more, one for every passing month. Then silence. Then, from the faint, sweet tubular chimes of the clock overhead, the four quarters and the twelve strokes of midnight. The ringers grasped their ropes. 'Go!'

The Bells! The Bells! Esmeraldaaaaa!.....Okay, okay, wrong book. Well, at least the Esmeralda part.

Lord Peter is such a handy bloke to have around. Not only can he solve mysteries like it's nobody's business, he's also a seasoned change ringer. So, when his car breaks down on New Year's Eve and he and Bunter are taken in at the vicarage in Fenchurch St. Paul, he helps his host out by joining a nine-hour-long bell ringing service.

'Not in the least, Mrs Venables. Nothing would please me more than to ring bells all day and all night. I am not tired at all. I really don't need rest. I would far rather ring bells. The only thing that worries me is whether I shall be able to get through the peal without making stupid mistakes.'

What the congregation does not know when they ring in the new year, is that at the same time, a man died mysteriously in their midst.

'A corpse? Well, of course there's a corpse. Lady Thorpe is buried there. You buried her yourself.'

'Yes, sir, but this here corpus ain't Lady Thorpe's corpus. It's a man's corpus, that's what it is, and it du seem as though it didn't have no right to be there. So I says to Dick—'

'A man's corpse! What do you mean? Is it in a coffin?'

This was a great story. Not only did the mystery prove to be more than a straight-forward who-dunnit, there were also a few more insights into Lord Peter's and other characters war time experiences. Sayers really made sure that her postwar settings did not deny the scars and damage that the First World War had left on the survivors. It's an aspect of the series I very much admire. And all of it is tied up with a lot of humor.

'Superintendent,' he said, 'I think I have been the most unmitigated and unconscionable ass that ever brayed in a sleuthhound's skin. Now, however, I have solved the entire problem, with one trivial exception. Probably you have done so too.'

'I'll buy it,' said Mr Blundell. 'I'm like you, my lord, I'm doing no more guessing. What's the bit you haven't solved, by the way?'
'Well, the murder,' said his lordship, with an embarrassed cough. 'I can't quite make out who did that, or how. But that, as I say, is a trifle.'

Susan says

The eleventh Lord Peter Wimsey novel sees him and Bunter on their way to spend New Years with friends, when their car funs off the road, into a ditch, in a snowstorm. They find themselves stranded in the village of Fenchurch St Pauls, where they are taking in by the kindly Reverend Venables and his wife. However, far from being a relaxing evening, the Reverend discovers that Lord Peter has some experience bell ringing – his personal passion. With the village decimated by influenza, and a man short, he asks Wimsey to take part in a planned bell ringing marathon.

While staying with the Reverend, Lord Peter hears of the death of Lady Thorpe and of the theft of an emerald necklace some years before, when Mrs Wilbraham was a guest at the wedding of Lady Thorpe and Sir Henry. This theft left Sir Henry in financial difficulties, as he insisted on paying her back for the stolen gems and, although his butler, Deacon, was arrested, along with another man, the necklace was never discovered.

A few months later, a body is found in the graveyard of the Reverend's Church, which should not be there and he contacts Lord Peter,, who gleefully goes to investigate. On hearing the corpse has had his hands removed and face beaten to disfigure him, he observes, "Splendid!" However, this is not an easy case to solve. It revolves around the missing necklace, an unsolved crime, a mysterious man that Lord Peter met while leaving the village, a corpse found in French underwear and a cryptic clue in the belfry...

This is a excellent novel and a good addition to the Lord Peter Wimsey mysteries. . It has a fantastic setting, a good cast of characters, lots of clues and a good sense of atmosphere. I think this is one of the most enjoyable Lord Peter Wimsey novels that I have read so far and I really enjoyed the Fenland setting and the bell ringing, which I knew virtually nothing about. I am looking forward to reading on and finally finishing all of the Wimsey series.

Alvin says

It is immaterial that this is a mystery. It is , I think, a great accomplishment in fiction.I love books that educate or impart archane info in support of atmosphere or the story and this is one of those. It had me searching for recordings of change ringing(it also helped me "get" Richard Thompson's "Time to Ring Some Changes", a small thing but there it is.Take it as read that I love and recommend all the Whimsey books and ,and yes,the boy is down with the hyper-romantic H. Vane series; which everyone should read.Says me!

Nikki says

One of my favourites of the Peter Wimsey books, though I have to say that this time I felt that there was

something a bit off about the pacing. It felt a little slow in places, and because the 'murdered' man so patently obviously "deserved" it (i.e. is not a sympathetic sort of character: I'm not a fan of the death penalty or revenge killings or anything like that, but you do feel that he "got what was coming to him") it's difficult to feel any urgency about the investigation, especially because you feel -- as Peter does -- that it'd really be best if it could all just be left alone.

Still, the book really got to me in the sense of the Thodays plight, and basically all the upheaval that one bad man caused, over the years, in a small village. And there's the way that when you realise how Deacon died, you do feel pity for him, even though he was a bad man, because it just seems so awful.

No Harriet in this book, and as far as I remember, not even a mention thereof. There is a good helping of Bunter, though.
