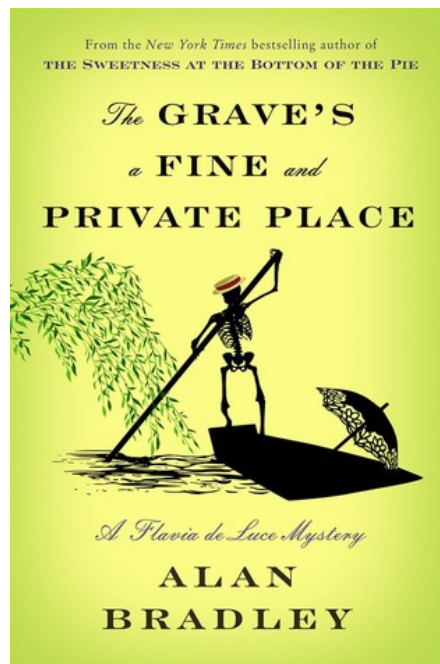




The Grave's a Fine and Private Place

Alan Bradley

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Flavia is enjoying the summer, spending her days punting along the river with her reluctant family. Languishing in boredom, she drags a slack hand in the water, and catches her fingers in the open mouth of a drowned corpse.

Brought to shore, the dead man is found to be dressed in blue silk with ribbons at the knee, and wearing a single red ballet slipper.

Flavia needs to put her super-sleuthing skills to the test to investigate the murder of three gossips in the local church, and to keep her sisters out of danger. But what could possibly connect the son of an executed killer, a far too canny police constable, a travelling circus, and the publican's mysteriously talented wife?

The Grave's a Fine and Private Place Details

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From Reader Review The Grave's a Fine and Private Place for online ebook

Petra says

NOTE: I won this book in a GR Giveaway in return for an honest review.

This is a bittersweet story. On the one hand, Flavia is growing up and maturing. It's wonderful to see the person she is becoming emerge. On the other hand, Flavia is changing and that's always a bit sad. Childhood is ending.

I am enjoying how the relationships between the sisters is being exposed in the last couple of books. Also, Flavia's relationship with Dogger is more focused on and it's a delight to see.

The mystery is, like always, interesting and fun. Another fun time with Flavia. I loved the chemistry experiments that were rigged up to help solve this case.

I look forward to more books in future. Flavia's future is very much at a crossroads. With her interests and abilities, she can go anywhere she wants to.

Jan says

As a fan of this series, I was underwhelmed by book 8. This book could very well be the best yet and sets up the story line for new adventures to come!

Barbara says

This is the ninth addition to the 'Flavia de Luce' series, set in 1950s England. You could read the book as a standalone, but for maximum enjoyment (and minimum spoilers) the series is best read in order.

Flavia de Luce is a supremely self-confident twelve-year-old girl who's deeply interested in two things: chemistry and detective work. In her young life Flavia has frequently used her scientific expertise - and native smarts - to solve murders.

As the book opens, Flavia is on holiday with her two older sisters, Ophelia (Feely) and Daphne (Daffy), and the family manservant Dogger - who's been with the de Luce clan for years. The little group is punting down a river near the village of Volesthorpe when Flavia, trailing her hand in the water, closes her fingers over what she thinks is a fish. Delighted, Flavia pulls up the catch.....only to discover it's the corpse of a young man.

The cadaver is deposited on the shore, and - while the authorities are being summoned - Flavia takes the opportunity to carefully examine the body. She also takes a mysterious scrap of paper from one of the

pockets. This is standard operating procedure for Ophelia, who's always hiding evidence from the police so she can solve cases first.

The dead man is identified as Orlando Whitbread, an up-and-coming actor with the local 'Puddle Lane Little Theater.' Orlando is the protégé of Poppy Mandrill, a once famous actress who - after losing a leg - became a director. The dead man is best known, however, for being the son of Canon George Whitbread of Volesthorpe's 'St. Mildred's-in-the-Marsh Church.' The Canon was hanged a few years before for poisoning three female parishioners at Holy Communion.

The town's police officer, Constable J.R. Otter, quickly calls Orlando's death a drowning.....and orders Flavia to stop her nosy probing. This only heightens Flavia's suspicions, since she's SURE Orlando was poisoned. Thus, Flavia continues to vigorously pursue her inquiries, with Dogger's invaluable help. Moreover, the amateur sleuth decides to re-investigate the case of Canon Whitbread....who she thinks might have been innocent.

As Flavia flits around Volesthorpe she meets the undertaker's son, Hob Nightingale - who provides valuable information, a helping hand, and a smidge of friendship that Flavia badly needs.

In previous books, Flavia has always been at odds with her sisters, and once even doused Feely's lipstick with poison ivy. However, the girls are more mature now, and on better terms. Thus, Flavia's inquiries are greatly assisted by Daffy's extensive knowledge of literature and poetry. As for Feely, she's still vain and self-absorbed, but she plays the organ beautifully at St. Mildred's-in-the-Marsh Church. In addition, Feely's fiancé plays an important part in the story.

In the course of the tale, Flavia makes important discoveries that put her in grave danger, but she eventually discovers the truth about everything.

I enjoyed the book, which has the usual mix of interesting characters, fun science, and a creative mystery. One chapter, though - where Flavia has a 'psychic vision' of the female parishioners being poisoned - is not credible and should have been left out (IMO).

I'd recommend the book to mystery lovers, especially fans of Flavia de Luce.

You can follow my reviews at <https://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot....>

JanB says

This series remains delightful. I'm a huge fan of Flavia and this, the 9th in the series, was terrific. I love how smart and precocious she is - her snark and wit, and how she employs her love and knowledge of chemistry to solve the crime. Flavia has had some hard knocks in the last few books and it was nice to see the relationship between Dogger and Flavia develop in this book.

The book's ending is the perfect set-up for where the author will take the series, and makes me excited for the next book.

Donna says

Alan Bradley is a master storyteller. This book is the 9th book in the Flavia de Luce series. I think I like Flavia more and more with each new installment. What I love the most, is how the characters evolve in each book. I'm glad the the author propels them all forward and that the reader is getting to know them more and more with each book. The different stories also seem new with each book and aren't falling into the "formulaic" trap that is often prevalent in other books/series.

This book was a little more calm than the one that preceded it....I'm glad for that. And I love Dogger. He is a great anchor....but I really want him to open up. I'm glad we will be seeing more of him in future books.

Jeanette says

Certainly, for me anyway, more entertaining than the last #8 was. But it lost an entire star by not having the plot make any logical or practical sense whosoever.

If you like snarky thoughts and self-evaluations at a speed of multiples a second per every situation or interaction with/ re Flavia, then you will love this one. It's so long in that category that at page 300, with some of the lengthy departures into poetry and symbolism- the entire became so stretched as to be tedious.

No Gladys at all! A sacrilege. And yet Dogger with a few new characters like Mrs. Palmer and Claire made the entire readable for me. All of my most loved Flavia characteristics shone the most only during the diatom and other testings portions that she managed with Dogger. Hob was just left hanging for any conclusions or after effect. HUH? And several other characters were just not set well into the continuity of the whole tale or the ending of it at all. Like the Constable- but not only one or two. Three I can think of. With all that length-why?

Much better in spirits of interchange between the sisters than the last 2 books were- but drove behind the sharpest chemistry nuance and unique eyes to what slithers all across the fields or places she roams within the Bishop's Lacey district of those first 3 Flavia books.

The jolts between Flavia "eras" are severe in this series, book to book. And now we see what is coming up next in the last paragraph here of this longish novel for the scenario of the future/ next. And I'm afraid that this series has just about lost me for its flow. It's gotten like a stand up comedian who makes the exact form of joke about 2 or 3 subjects over and over again.

Holly says

Some books just make you happy because characters have become like friends or family to you.....this series is like that for me. I love Flavia and I hope to hear more from her.

Kathy says

Flavia de Luce is one of the best characters to come along in mystery fiction. I've been hooked on this precocious eleven, now twelve-year-old, since the first book in the series, Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie. Flavia's brilliant mind in chemistry and solving murders has filled each book with a magical presence.

The setting, largely at her rundown family estate Buckshaw outside of the bucolic English hamlet of Bishop's Lacey in the 1950s adds charm to the quirky stories of murder and deceit in which Flavia seems to find herself. And, then the last book, *Thrice the Branded Cat Hath Mew'd*, has placed the series in a seemingly darker than usual place where readers looked to the current book, *The Grave's a Fine and Private Place*, to answer questions of what was to become of Flavia and her two tormenting sisters, Feely and Daffy, and the rest of the endearing household. Of course, no reader expects all her questions to be answered, but I very much needed a sense of direction from *The Grave's a Fine and Private Place*. I can't say that this was a favorite book in the series for me, but I do think Flavia grew up a lot in this book and is in a good place to take control of her destiny back into her own hands. It felt like a necessary book, to advance the direction of those characters we've come to love who reside at Buckshaw.

For the rest of this review, please visit my reading blog at <http://www.readingroom-readmore.com/2...>

Kevin says

"possibilities are so much more thrilling than certainties"

Warning: I am going to gush.

I adore Flavia DeLuce!! Honestly this now 14 year old precocious chemist is someone I wish were a friend or maybe I could be her brilliant uncle...maybe my favorite character in all fiction! In a word, delightful!

A couple of my favorite quotes from this series...

"Anyone who knew the word slattern was worth cultivating as a friend."

"Tell them we may not be praying with them," Father told the Vicar, "but we are at least not actively praying against them."

"It is not unknown for fathers with a brace of daughters to reel off their names in order of birth when summoning the youngest, and I had long ago become accustomed to being called 'Ophelia Daphne Flavia, damn it.'"

"She consumed books like a whale eats krill."

"You never know what you're getting into when you stick your nose in other people's rubbish."

Start this fabulous series with the brilliant and Edgar Award winning, "The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie."

I just finished "The Grave's a Fine and Private Place" and thought it was a dazzling 5 star book. I was actually saddened when it was over. My highest of recommendations! This one is truly a great and fun read!

LJ says

First Sentence: I am on my deathbed.

Flavia de Luce, her two sisters and Dogger, their loyal family servant, go on holiday to the hamlet of Volesthorne. Drifting in a boat on the river, hand in the water, Flavia becomes snagged on what she imagines is Hemingway's great marlin from "The Old Man and the Sea." Even more to Flavia's style, is the discovery that her hand caught in the mouth of a corpse. The dead man was the son of the local church's Canon, who was hanged for poisoning three of his parishioners; the church ladies. But was the Canon really guilty? And who killed his son? What better than a murder investigation to take Flavia's mind off her troubles?

The first thing one should remember about Flavia is that she is 14 years' old, brilliant and highly dramatic. She is also wonderfully written by Bradley who has created the perfect voice for her, and the perfect opening. As with most series, one does best to read the books in order. However, Bradley ensured first-time readers are fully introduced to the characters, their roles, and are brought quickly up to date.

Some may find Flavia's viewpoint a bit uncomfortable—"Most people probably never stop to think about why our burial places are so green. But if they ever did, their faces might turn the very shade of that graveyard grass... For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," the Bible tells us. "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," says The Book of Common Prayer. But both of these books, having been written mostly in good taste, fail to mention either the stinking jelly or the oozing liquids and the gaseous phases through which each of us must pass on our way to the Great Beyond." Yet for others of us, it is that perspective which makes her unique and delightful, and the way in which Flavia comes across the first body is very bit Flavia.

Bradley's use of humor shows through in most situation, including his metaphors—"But, believe it or not, at that very instant, an idea came flying out of nowhere and landed on my head, like a pigeon on a statue of Lord Nelson." The inclusion of rare and unusual bits of information, such as how one can cause oneself to blush, add to that which makes Bradley's writing so delightful.

We do see changes and growth in the characters. It is nice that we see a new side of Flavia's sister, Feeley, at the same time as does she. We realize that Dogger is, in some ways, an older and more experienced version of Flavia. Although set in the 1950s, we are made aware of how recent was WWII, and of its impact through Dogger's incidence with PTSD. It's nice to see him develop as a character who is coming into his own. He is observant, rather wise; a father-figure, friend and advisor to Flavia—"I love it when Dogger talked like this. It made me feel that we were partners." Flavia is gaining some self-awareness and is maturing, yet Flavia is a character one either loves, or finds rather terrifying, or both.

In spite of the title and the humor, this is no cozy. The mystery, and the investigation, is well-plotted and executed, with red herrings and well-done suspense. Bradley always plays fair with the readers, laying out the clues as we read.

"The Grave's a Fine and Private Place" is a captivating and delightful read, with a maturing Flavia, and a wonderful ending that leaves one very anxious for the next book.

THE GRAVE'S A FINE AND PRIVATE PLACE (Hist Mys-Flavia de Luce- England-1952) – VG+
Bradley, Alan – 9th in series
Delacorte Press, Jan 2018

Julie Durnell says

3.5 Stars. This turned out to be not my favorite Flavia mystery. She seems to be borderline ghoul at times! Don't get me wrong I still love her-she is changing though or maturing maybe. Her knowledge of chemistry

and other esoteric information is incredible, a child prodigy in essence. Flavia has a lot of discernment, which coupled with Dogger's, they are a fantastic detective duo. Dogger really shines in this story, his vast knowledge is also incredible. Her relationship with her sisters is mellowing out a bit which is part of the maturing I'm sure. I look forward to the next one with great anticipation as always.

Casey Frank says

4.5 stars rounded up

After 9 books centered around this precocious main character, you know exactly what kind of story you'll be getting. But it's the familiar (but not formulaic) style and well-loved characters that make me want to return again and again to the world of Flavia de Luce.

I assume the 9th book is not going to be the first book someone picks up, but if in case you're new to the series, start with *The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie* and enjoy the adventure from the start. A spoiler from the end of the last book is coming:

I wasn't sure what to expect from this book given that Flavia's father died at the end of the previous book. What would happen to the three sisters? How would Flavia handle the loss?

The answer turned out to be a long family vacation led by Dogger, especially meant to keep Feely occupied while she waits for her postponed wedding, and a lot of British stiff-upper-lip.

As usual, Flavia quickly finds a dead body, and discovers more than one mystery in the town they're visiting. With Flavia's father gone, we get a chance to see just how much paternal and sleuthing influence Dogger has on Flavia.

Reading these books feels like getting to visit a dear friend you haven't seen in a year, you want to spend time with them for who they've already proven to be, and you want to spend time with them to see who they've become while you were apart. This book ended with a hint at what could be a truly marvelous setup for the final book of the series. If Flavia's suggestion comes to pass, then readers will easily be able to imagine the fulfilled life that Flavia and Dogger will get to carry out long after the last page.

Many thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for allowing me to read an early copy of this book!

Jackie says

2.5 stars. Just above OK. I love Alan Bradley's series, but this one seemed to drag on and on for most of the book. Too many random events and relationships. I couldn't understand how Flavia ever came up with her conclusions, based on what happened in the story. The only part I enjoyed was the personal side to the story, Dogger's evolution and the family dynamics between the sisters.

Susanna - Censored by GoodReads says

Thanks, Petra!

Actual rating: 3.5 stars. Charming as ever, but part of the plot could make more sense.

Melanie (Mel's Bookland Adventures) says

I remember reading my first Flavia De Luce mystery 4 years ago and being instantly hooked. Everything from the disheveled manor house, the horrid sisters, the housekeeper/cook that cannot really cook nor keep house, the general factotum Dogger... to last but not least Flavia herself, 11 year old chemist, lonely and very precocious.

Now, imagine my surprise when I recommended this series to a friend and she did not like it because of Flavia. I nearly took offense, because at times, we do take insults to favourite fictional characters rather personal. Yet, thinking about it, I can see that Flavia may split the lovers and haters quite distinctly.

I adore her. I laugh out loud reading it, I am often feeling very sad for her. I know there is a huge part of me that can identify my own 11 year old with Flavia.

The series also captures a certain post-war mood in 1950ies Britain, the manors of the former rich now broke were falling apart, rationing was still going, it just did not really feel like a war had being won.

I was delighted when I got send a digital ARC for book 9 in the series. Ecstatic. Delirious. And I immediately sat down and read it. The De Luce girls are on a little holiday, punting along a river, when Flavia accidentally (is there any other way) dead body floating in the river. More cannot be said about the plot as this is an ongoing series.

Naturally, I highly recommend this. But start at the beginning. If you hate precocious children, this may not be for you. Otherwise, find a comfy chair, make yourself a cuppa and fetch a plate of biscuits and enjoy.

I certainly did.
