



I'd Rather Be in Philadelphia

Gillian Roberts

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Book three in the Anthony Award-winning mystery series featuring Amanda Pepper, the resourceful English teacher at Philly Prep.

Amanda is sorting books for a school fundraiser, when she comes across a book for battered women that contains a special and frightening message from its original, anonymous owner. Desperate to learn who donated the books, Amanda's search leads her to deliberate brutality and its cold-blooded consequences. Gillian Roberts is "the Dorothy Parker of mystery writers, laughing when--especially when--it hurts, and giving more wit per page than most writers give per book."

Nancy Pickard

I'd Rather Be in Philadelphia Details

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From Reader Review I'd Rather Be in Philadelphia for online ebook

Gina says

I'm not entirely sure how I found this book, but I must have read it 50+ times in high school. I hadn't read it in years, but recently had surgery and this was perfect non-taxing reading. Even now I still practically know it by heart.

The rest of the series is somewhat hit or miss, but I'd still recommend if you're looking for some easy mysteries. Gillian Roberts has a dry sense of humor which I always thought set these apart from many other amateur PI mysteries.

Alan says

And I'd rather be reading another book. Sleuthing out the unidentified victim of ongoing tragic, senseless domestic violence should be a good central theme for a mystery but the author failed to deliver. These mysteries are focused on a female audience but, more to the point, are sluggish and uninspired. This, the second book of this series that I read (although actually the third entry, because the second book of the series had a Christmas theme which didn't appeal to me) was less satisfying than the first. Probably won't probe further.

Merle says

This is a short fun book to read while sitting around staying warm during a snowstorm. A fun light mystery about a school teacher who solves mysteries..she has a new developing relationship with a police officer. In this novel Amanda Pepper finds a book about spouse abuse with comments in the margins. She sets out to find out who was writing these comments to see if she can save them. That of course leads to murder and danger.

Gillian Roberts writes in a light witty style. Using descriptive language she writes clever dialog and the thoughts going on in Amanda's head, "Clifford waved his gun like a traffic policeman's baton, directing us in Neil's classroom, a fit setting, I feared, in which to become a footnote to history. Stay tuned. Story at eleven."

Find out whodunit when you read "I'd Rather Be in Philadelphia"

Victoria says

2.5

Margaret says

Amanda Pepper, the resourceful English teacher at Philly Prep, is sorting books for a school fundraiser, when she comes across a book for battered women that contains a special and frightening message from its original, anonymous owner. Desperate to learn who donated the books, Amanda's search leads her to deliberate brutality and its cold-blooded consequences.

I really like this author's style of writing - first person with a touch of humor - and I'd previously read another book with Amanda Pepper, *Caught Dead in Philadelphia*. I think there's one more in this series.

Toni Osborne says

Amanda is sorting books for a school fundraiser, when she makes a chilling discovery. She comes across a book for battered women, underlined in it are passages describing violent abuse and scribbled in the margin are frightening messages by the anonymous owner. Concern she searches for the woman to see if she could help, doing so she learns a startling lesson about brutality and its consequences.

Amanda Pepper is an appealing heroine easy to relate to, a funny character, inquisitive enough to get involved into mystery solving. The plot is written with a serious note, the main theme revolving around domestic violence. Roberts created an interesting blend of mystery, tragedy and humour. The writing shines with the narrator's sensitivity, charm and intelligence. Short and sweet novel.

Donita says

A quick, cozy read that had me laughing out loud at the end. Just not deep enough to rate more than 2 stars for me.

Nolan says

So, if you're a person who must start at the beginning of a mystery series, you'll probably want to skip this review until you get to it in the series. It's early on in the series, but it's not the first book.

What absolutely captivated me about this book is its ability to forcefully pull you into it and keep you there.

Amanda Pepper is a high-school English teacher in Philadelphia. She's 30, unmarried with a cop boyfriend, well liked by her colleagues, and mostly tolerated by her students. Why do so many of these female sleuths have to have a cop boyfriend? Seriously, folks, why can't these women date spindly-legged metrosexuals or a John Candie look-alike? It's always a cop, and that gets me a little tired.

The book opens as Amanda is engaged in a surprising dialogue with a student who expresses her outrage over Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. Seizing the moment, as a good teacher will, Amanda suggests that the girl expend some of her frustration on an upcoming term paper about the evils of relationship abuse.

A few scant pages later, we see Amanda sorting books for the school's annual "This Is Not a Garage Sale." She stumbles into a book written as a self-help guide for women who have been abused, and she finds notes in the margins from a recent reader. These notes will chill you to the bone. They are cries for help as if the abused reader were screaming in crisp well-defined stereo. The writing style of this author ensures that these notes in the margins and the underlined passages are more than mere words you'll yawn your way through. You, like Amanda, will become captivated and obsessed with finding the donor and trying to get help to her before it's too late.

Amanda's search for the donor takes her to the house of her friend and to the house of her sister—neither of whom suffer at the hands of anyone in their lives, but both of whom Amanda questions and examines closely in a new way brought on by the cry for help penciled in that book.

There's a great subplot here about a commercial tutorial service for which Amanda wants to work as a way of bringing down a few extra bucks. A colleague at school warns her against working there, but her need for the extra bucks enables her to ignore his warnings for the most part. Those two plots come together rather energetically when Amanda finds the owner of the tutorial service dead on his kitchen floor with his battered bruised wife elsewhere in the house.

Be careful about leaping to conclusions about who did this. You may well figure it out early; I didn't, but it all made sense at the end.

There's very little bad language in this book, and I don't recall any sex scenes. You get the understanding that Amanda and the boyfriend are intimate, but there are no tiresome descriptions of things you can just as easily figure out. This author's talents are expressed in her ability to show you things rather than tell you. The chilling words scrawled in that book lend a sense of urgency and vividness to the search first for the abused woman and finally for the killer of her husband.

The book ranges over to the man-hater side a bit more than I'd like in spots. Yeah, that's understandable, but I could have done without some of that. But there is no shortage of humor here. Amanda's mom, worried that she has a 30-year-old daughter who isn't married, sends her a primer on how to meet men. The cop boyfriend is also dealing with an ex-girlfriend who has resurfaced after a divorce, and the author's characterization of the ex-girlfriend will bring a smile here and there.

Kim Mccarter says

This is the first book I read of the Amanda Pepper series because it was the first one in the series my library had on the shelf. In short, I would not rather be in Philadelphia. I was intrigued by the teaching elements of the book (I'm a teacher), but the private school world of the book is far different from my Southern public school experience. The characters are good, but they don't really seem fully developed. It was an entertaining read, but I'm going to skip 4 and 5 and go on to 6 (the next one on my library's shelf) and not worry about what I'm missing. This is unusual for me since I'm a stickler for reading EVERY book in a series, in order. I don't really care about what I'm missing....

Don says

if you're looking for a fun, short read to end your summer, "I'd Rather be in Philadelphia" might be right up your alley.

English teacher Amanda Pepper is searching through books at a school fundraiser when she comes across one with notes in the margins which appear to have been written by an abused spouse. Her cop boyfriend wishes she wouldn't investigate, but, of course, she does.

The mystery here is enough to keep you interested, though I certainly wouldn't describe it as edge of the seat suspenseful. What kept me reading was the mood of the book. I liked Amanda and her world and the mystery was complex enough to keep me guessing.

The only downside to this one was the narration by Annie Wauters. Unfortunately, she narrates most of the books in the series. Still, this was good enough that I may very well come back for more.

Jim says

This book had something of a split personality. I did not like the first half at all. The premise was annoying and unbelievable and the heroine acted illogically and stupidly. Once we got past all of that, the second half of the story was better, actually worth reading. The ending was not great, with her solving the mystery by the bad guy getting nervous and confessing. The mystery was not great either, one of those where any of the suspects could have done it, the author just chose one.

Obviously this was not one of my favorite books.

Fmorlan says

Amanda Pepper teaches English at Philly Prep. She was on the pseudo garage sale committee. In organizing the books for sale, she finds a book with notes and passages underlined. She is convinced there is a woman in trouble and starts sleuthing. When the wrong person ends up dead she is not sure who did it. All the while CK has an old flame from Louisiana visiting making Amanda more frustrated. She gets involved in the murder and becomes also a target. In the end, the flame leaves, murder solved but still no first name for CK

LJ says

I'D RATHER BE IN PHILADELPHIA - Good
Roberts, Gillian - 3rd in series

Resourceful English teacher at Philly Prep., Amanda Pepper is sorting books for a school fundraiser, when she comes across a book for battered women that contains a special and frightening message from its

original, anonymous owner. Desperate to learn who donated the books, Amanda's search leads her to deliberate brutality and its cold-blooded consequences.

It's a good read, but the series is getting a bit mundane for me. I'm just not a big fan of the amateur sleuth.

Jill Holmes says

Gillian Roberts (who also writes as novelist Judith Greber) has crafted a delightful mystery series about Amanda "Mandy" Pepper, a high school English teacher at Philly Prep, a college preparatory school for kids lacking scholastic talent but gifted with rich parents. While Philadelphia with its big-city problems does not always seem the best setting for "cosies", it also has a wealth of color, history, and character that Roberts draws on well. Amanda lives in a history-filled neighborhood, has a persistent matchmaker (fortunately retired to distant Florida) for a mother, and also has a hot-cold relationship with Police Detective C. K. Mackenzie who brings his deceptive Southern drawl and physical charms to the Philly crime scene.

In "I'd Rather Be In Philadelphia", Amanda is trying to teach Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew" to her teenaged students who avidly dislike the story's attitude toward women. The school is about to have its fundraising "Not-a-Garage" Sale, and Amanda is helping sort and price books. She finds a book about battered women that is filled with notes by an abused woman who seems sure her man will follow through with his promise to kill her. The passages frighten Amanda and prompt her to try to find the book's donor and the author of the horrifying notations; to add to the mystery, the book came from a box labelled with the name of Sasha Berg, Amanda's best friend and social butterfly. Meanwhile, her friend and history teacher Neil Quigley is moonlighting as a tutor and encourages Amanda to do the same to earn some extra cash. Neil owns his franchise but has had growing problems with main office and the company's owner, Wynn Teller. A charismatic speaker and business wizard grown immensely wealthy, Teller's son Hugh was Amanda's student once and a gifted performer who seemed destined for Broadway.

Taking up the burden of the abused woman is hardly Amanda's ideal pursuit. She is fighting a terrible winter cold and is angry because her boyfriend's ex-wife is not only visiting Philadelphia but staying with him. Mandy fears the ex--called Jinx--is a scheming, modern-day Scarlett O'Hara, and she fears for her relationship with Detective Mackenzie and wrestles with her growing feelings for him. Further sleuthing suggests the mystery book might have belonged to Amanda's sister Beth who seems to have the ideal marriage and family. But what does one really know about someone else's private life?

Neil's tutoring center mysteriously burns to the ground, and the normally mild-mannered man becomes possessed with what he believes is a plot to destroy him; the center is gone but his debt is not. Teller's ex-wife also arrives on the scene convinced that the idea for the tutoring centers was hers and that she should sue her former husband and, incidentally, destroy his do-gooder reputation. Sister Beth directs Amanda to Martha Thornton, who turns out to be a minister's wife; could she be the abused woman of the dramatic notes? She leads Amanda to Lydia Teller, current wife of the miracle businessman, and mother of gifted Hugh. The circle seems to be tightening around Wynn Teller as Amanda becomes more determined to find the abused woman. When she snoops through school files about Hugh, runs into Neil who also has after-hours secrets, and then discovers the murdered body of Wynn Teller, she calls for Mackenzie but is uncertain which aspects of the story to tell and which to leave out to protect Neil and, possibly, Hugh and the unknown woman.

After a few more breadcrumbs, Amanda succeeds in finding the woman and shelters her in her apartment.

She fails in pulling the wool over Mackenzie's eyes whilst he is baffled at how Amanda stumbles into such situations without realizing she puts herself at risk. How is her friend Neil involved? What of Wynn Teller's complex, jealousy-driven relationships? And how can she make "The Taming of the Shrew" real and relevant to her students, one of whom calls "Willie" Shakespeare a "chauvinist pig"?

"I'd Rather Be In Philadelphia" was first published in 1992. In the 20 years since, stories of battered women as well as advice, shelters, and considerable information about abusers and their victims and related psychology have been so overwhelming that this mystery seems dated in some ways and overwhelming in Amanda's dogged determination to track down one sad case. But maybe this is a theme we can never hear about too often. And maybe a gentle mystery that carries in it lots of humor, history, teenagers' troubles, a drawling detective, and a cat insistent on being fed cloaks real, topical tragedies in just the right staging reminiscent of a Shakespearean tale. Although this is not my favorite Amanda Pepper mystery, I enjoyed it and recommend it. I do, suggest, however, that readers check out the other Amanda Pepper stories and not rely on this one alone to shape their impressions.

Jenn says

Amanda Pepper is back! And she's still one of my favorite non-professional sleuths. An English teacher by day, mystery solver by final bell. I don't know how she always finds herself in the predicaments she does. Always a dead body. This time, the death is a little more surprising. It wasn't quite the dead body I had expected to turn up. A very pleasant surprise, nonetheless.

The stream of healthy characters in this one made for an awesome read. Being a huge book geek, having Amanda try and track down the owner of a donated book on spousal abuse was titillating! Imagine trying to hunt down the original owner of a piece of literature that had been used as a standby diary. Deciphering someone's neat printing in the margins of a book that details a taboo topic, and then pairing it up with almost everyone you know must take up a lot of energy. But exceedingly intriguing at the same time. If I found something like that at a jumble sale, I think I might turn into a wannabe sleuth as well.

I love that Gillian Roberts chose not to update the story from its original in the '90s. Some of Amanda and Helga's thoughts on computers make me giggle. I remember when they were fairly new and somewhat obscure. I probably had the same phobias of them at that time! And to think they are so commonplace now. Can't wait for the next installation of Amanda Pepper in Philly.
