



## The Memorial Hall Murder

*Jane Langton*

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## **The Memorial Hall Murder** Jane Langton

When Harvard's Memorial Hall is bombed, the shattering of its huge rose windows resounds throughout the campus; but when a corpulent and headless corpse is found amid the debris, and the big, beloved chorus leader, Hamilton Dow, cannot be located, more than the peace and quiet of an illustrious university is disturbed. Is the corpse that of the missing conductor?

## **The Memorial Hall Murder Details**

Date : Published March 26th 1981 by Penguin Books (first published 1978)

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Author : Jane Langton

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## From Reader Review The Memorial Hall Murder for online ebook

### Lynetta says

"Ebullience and good humor and a sort of picnic charm of abandon and play . . . a good mystery," Eudora Welty comments on the back of the edition I read. I agree completely. A cozy to read before bedtime, the illustrations are charming, and the buildings of and around Harvard are well described. Handel's *Messiah* plays a big part in the book and in the resolution.

As with almost books, there is a lot of luck...Homer Kelly, a lieutenant detective, just happens to be on campus to teach a literature course with his wife. Vick just happens to take on the *Messiah* after Ham(ilton) Dow, (music director) happens to be killed in a bombing. President of the university, James Cheever, "was doing his damndest to suppress the smile that was tugging at the muscles of his cheeks. His enemy was dead." (page 10)

There is a lovely, well drawn cast of eccentric characters.

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### Laura says

Very good writing. Enjoyed the good book. I love the illustrations in her books.

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### Katherine Rowland says

The pros: engaging characterizations, switching points of view that actually helped the narrative, interesting mechanics, and plenty of intrigue. The cons: the book tried to think important thoughts and tell a good story, and the two goals didn't work in tandem. And--like other "literary" novels--it was just so verbose, as though many words make a book great or important or literate. Instead, it was just pretentious and tedious, thoughts percolated over and over until they're bitter.

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### Dogsandbooks says

Good author to follow, intriguing Boston stories. Dpl e book via dreading

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### Bruce says

This light piece of detective fiction, a piece of froth really, indeed rather a spoof, was written nearly four decades ago by Jane Langton, a writer of juvenile fiction and a former graduate student at Radcliffe. It is an undemanding read, a book that can be finished in a couple of evenings, and it will appeal primarily to those with a fairly intimate knowledge and experience of Harvard. A man is murdered in Memorial Hall, of course, and someone with an existing detailed knowledge of the building will be most intrigued. A knowledge and appreciation of the governance of the University and an enjoyment of music will also enhance one's enjoyment of the book. Each chapter is headed by a fragment of the score of Handel's *Messiah*, and literary

allusions also abound. As a student more than half a century ago, I was in the building several times a week for lectures, Harvard band rehearsals, and final exams, and over the years I have revisited the site many times. There have been many changes over the years in and around Harvard Square, but the ambiance is unchanged. Langton's own line illustrations are delightful.

This novel fulfills all the criteria for an airplane book, particularly if the flight is short.

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### **Linda says**

During a choir rehearsal for "Messiah" an explosion occurs in Memorial Hall at Harvard, and Hamilton Dow disappears and is thought to be dead in the ruins. I culled this book from a shelf of old paperbacks and read it in stretches when I had nothing else to read in between library books. I kept going because I wanted to find out what really happened to Ham, but it really wasn't worth it. I have read some of Jane Langton's New England mysteries before and thought that I liked them more than this.

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### **Francis says**

I guess what I like about Jane Langton is she tells a good yarn and her illustrations/pen drawings are superb.

However, I often struggle with her dialogue and her characters which are both one dimensional and too Pollyannish for my liking. Sort of like a good natured murder mysteries series- yeah, kinda ..oxymoronish ..in a pleasant kind of way.

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### **Irene B. says**

Read this mystery many years ago. Then someone gave me a copy for Christmas--we were exchanging used books. I've been carrying it around in my bag for emergencies when I'm stuck somewhere, so it's taken me five months to finish. Homer does tend to wander in his thoughts, but I thought the characters were amusing and the novel a bit droll--about a music director who ends up trapped in the basement of an exploded building for an extended duration while his choir is rehearsing above him. Each chapter begins with the musical notation for an appropriate part of the "Hallelujah" chorus, and the many drawings of places around Harvard make for an unusual mystery novel. Four stars not so much for the plot as for the amusement factor.

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### **Marie says**

After enjoying the first and second books in the series so much, this one was so disappointing!

The first half of this book is just terrible and only by half listening to it while doing other things was I able to

get through it. Mercifully, the second half was better.

JL decided to write a book with an obvious villain, a ridiculous reason for murder, and a slew of details about Harvard university governance that no one cares about. This was definitely NOT the way to continue such a good series. Hopefully book #4 will recover the charm of books 1 & 2!

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### **Alton Motobu says**

Harvard music professor is killed during a terrorist bombing - his head was blown off but the body was intact - so it was assumed to be him. Prof Homer Kelly investigates and discovers the body was not the professor; it was the bomber's. The professor was trapped in a room below the rubble. He survived 6 weeks down there! Lots of descriptions of Harvard campus and surroundings. Takes place in late Oct to early Dec with 2 short references to Christmas.

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### **Cindy says**

A Homer Kelly book. Set in Harvard. I really like this one, maybe because I am a fan of Handel as well as a mystery lover. Many of her books have academic settings.

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### **Jane says**

Can't help singing the excerpts at the opening of each chapter.

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### **Eugene Lee says**

All my Harvard choir (especially HRCM) friends - this is a really fun book to read - set in Mem Hall and the subject of the murder mystery is the conductor of the Collegium Musicum!

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### **Ed says**

#3 in the Homer Kelly series.

Homer Kelly series - An explosion rocks the foundations of Harvard University's stately Memorial Hall. A corpulent body is found inside, decapitated by the blast. The dead man is Hamilton Dow, conductor of the school orchestra and one of the most beloved men on campus. The university's president, James Cheever, couldn't be more pleased. Dow had opposed every one of Cheever's attempts to improve and enlarge Harvard, and this terrible accident means that Cheever's path to complete domination of the campus is clear. But was it an accident? Homer Kelly, Harvard professor and occasional sleuth, is not so sure. Cheever was not the only man on campus who wanted Dow dead, and as Homer looks for the culprit he finds a terrible secret behind the bombing that turned the Civil War memorial into a tomb.

## **Zarina says**

This book was written in 1978. If I'm not mistaken, this book was brought over from England when my younger brother did his A-levels. I noticed that the price tag at the book of the books is a Malaysian distributor. Not sure if I was the one who bought it.

The condition of the book is good but the outer margin is so small that the letters are near the edge. But I love how each chapter begins with a short musical phase(?). Plus, there are a few illustrations which are missing in modern books.

For a change, its nice to step back in time. To the age of footwork detecting but then this book was a bit off hook. There were certain points where Homer could have solved the mystery but then, we needed to get the whole characters in and reaching the climax.

Good writing overall.

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