



# Philly Stakes

*Gillian Roberts*

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## Philly Stakes Gillian Roberts

Amanda Pepper, an English teacher at school for Philadelphia's filthy rich, is determined to teach the kids a lesson about the true spirit of Christmas. She intends to have them cook and serve a meal to the homeless, but unfortunately a powerful parent takes over, and the simple meal turns into a catered affair--topped off by murder. Of course, Amanda wants to solve the crime with her sometime boyfriend and cop C.K. Mackenzie. She's equally determeind to teach the the elusive killer a lesson or two, as well.

## Philly Stakes Details

Date : Published January 3rd 1995 by Ballantine Books (first published 1989)

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Author : Gillian Roberts

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## From Reader Review Philly Stakes for online ebook

### **Fmorlan says**

amanda pepper - teacher to the rich just wanted to show her students how help others during the holidays. Unfortunately, her idea was changed to promote one of the students father's goals. He had a good party but two ended up dead. Needless to say she did her share of sleuthing. I like this series being from Philadelphia.

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### **colleen says**

there's nothing like a mystery to take your mind off everyday worries. this is the second book in the amanda pepper series. i really like her character, so i keep reading the books.

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### **Stephanie says**

I didn't like this story as much as two others I had read by this author. Using the homeless as a plot device didn't work for me, but most of the characters had no appeal to me. If it wasn't for the fact that I LIKE the characters of Amanda, NoName, her mother and Sasha, I wouldn't even try another book. So, please, if you have not read this author before, DON'T start with this book. Start with the first one.

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### **Bruce Reiter says**

My first read of a Gillian Roberts. Recommended by Kathleen and read during a cruise in the Greek Islands so definitely a beach book. Set during the Christmas Holidays with a couple of unsanitary murders and a depressed student. A good untaxing romp for the sleuth in all of us.

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### **Tricia Layden says**

#### **Sassy Heroine**

Mystery stories are generally constructed about the same. This one is fun because of the main character who is a sassy English teacher who cares about her students, even the difficult ones.

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### **Jenn says**

Amanda Pepper is the ultimate in everyday crime solvers. She's really a school teacher, but seemed to find herself in some awkward situations where she just has to play sleuth. I really like her because she's believable. She doesn't pull clues and theories out of mid air and she doesn't go out of her way to find mysteries. She could almost be described as average and boring by those who don't know her. She also goes out of her way to help just about anyone. It's like she has a heart of gold even if that heart plunks her right

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into the middle of some serious trouble.

I'm still no closer to finding out what Mackenzie's first name is. And there's very little mention of that little mystery in this second novel. But I'm still intrigued. I'm thinking Gillian plans to stretch that one out throughout the entire mystery series. And I'm oddly okay with that. Gives me something to ponder when I'm not reading her Philly series.

I loved that Gillian did not decide to modernize the series as it was written a couple of decades ago. The whole debacle about the answering machine made me laugh. It reminded me of growing up and when my family got their first answering machine, tape included. I'm not sure the whole mystery would have worked if it had been modernized to today's standards.

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### **Linda Rowland says**

Really enjoying Amanda.

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### **Jill Holmes says**

Christmas is coming to Philadelphia, but teacher Amanda Pepper is having problems keeping the classroom seats filled as the holiday break approaches, let alone getting her students interested in the true meaning of the season. She teaches English at Philly Prep, a school where high school students prepare to go to college and their parents' money insures that they will get there. Amanda decides a project to feed the homeless may excite the kids and teach them about giving instead of receiving. She plans to have the kids cook the food and feed their fellow citizens. One parent, Alexander Clausen, has the money and power to take over the project, however, and he does so in fine style. A catered dinner at his mansion, elegant but unsuitable gifts, and a carefully selected group of homeless are arranged by Mr. Clausen, and Amanda only succeeds in getting her students to be unwilling servers.

The event arrives as do 65 homeless persons, members of the Clausen family, some society friends including Amanda's socialite friend Sasha Berg, and Alexander "Sandy" Clausen dressed as Santa Clause. Amanda is there with her students and other faculty. The only unwanted guest is a murderer. Mrs. Clausen is drunk, Santa's daughter (and Mandy's student) Laura is frightened out of her wits, and Laura and her brother Peter attempt to manage their mother in the midst of this fiasco. Amanda leaves as soon as decency permits, goes home to grade papers, and finds a disturbing essay by Laura. Amanda shares it with her on-and-off boyfriend, police detective C. K. Mackenzie, a smooth-talking Southerner who has her bewitched with his drawl and blue eyes. The disturbing news comes through that Alexander Clausen has died in a fire, and the whole world seems to know that his daughter has a history with fire. The rumor mill has consistently ground out stories about her burn scars, nightmares, and haunted essays. Amanda feels desperate to protect the girl from what she believes to be untruths. Laura compounds the problem by confessing to murdering her father, but her disraught mother and brother also confess. Mackenzie tries to tear down the confessions as school ends for Amanda and her students, and both she and Mackenzie contemplate Christmas plans that are unwanted and will keep them apart.

Amanda battles on against a cold and bad throat, Christmas shopping and other impossibilities, Philadelphia's city-in-winter gloom and hazards, and Mackenzie's obstinance in refusing to look beyond the Clausen family for the murderer. Amanda pushes him to check out the homeless, the caterers, the cab drivers, and a mystery man named Jacob--anyone associated with the ill-fated charity party. An ornamental

object appears to have been the murder weapon with the fire as a cover-up. Irate neighbors, Laura's Aunt Alma, Laura's missing boyfriend, and calls from Amanda's mother describing her matchmaking plans for Amanda's holiday visit to Florida all muddy the picture for the detecting school teacher. Amanda agrees to a special mission for one of her mother's aging friends and learns that Laura has been left alone. She remedies the latter by having Laura stay with her, secretly hoping it will get her out of the trip to Florida. A journalist named Nick was profiling Alexander Clausen before the murder and is now eager to publish while the story is still fresh; he befriends Amanda, somewhat against her better judgment. Laura goes with Amanda to take a gift to the elderly friend Minna, but Minna's ramblings seem somehow connected to the Clausen tragedy. Friend and photographer Sasha prints out photos from the party to try to identify the mystery man Jacob, the missing murder weapon, and other possible suspects who may have slid under the radar with the party as cover.

With so many threads to unravel, Amanda has her hands full with the mystery, her troubled houseguest, and the pending Florida "vacation". Can she resolve the murder with or without Mackenzie's help? What other clues will surface, and which of the present clutch of clues will prove to be red herrings? Christmas is a time to have a little faith--especially in the improving sleuthing skills of a Philadelphia school teacher named Amanda Pepper.

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### **Cindy says**

This is a great series and I really like how the author gives you a full view of the characters feelings. This was a tough scenario to read but I am sure many teachers are confronted with this type of crime to their students and chose to ignore it.

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### **LJ says**

Philly Stakes - G+  
Roberts, Gillian

Philadelphia schoolteacher Amanda Pepper wants her students to develop some social consciousness, but when the wealthy benefactor of a party for the homeless is killed, she becomes a teacher-turned-detective.

Light but quite good.

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### **Connie says**

If you can overlook the references to out-of-marriage relationships . . . , this is a humorous, cleverly written, suspenseful read. Amanda Pepper teaches at Philly Prep, "a school for overly-privileged underachievers." She wants to plan an activity to get her students to look beyond themselves, but a noted wealthy, politician-wannabe business man takes over. After the event, there is a fire and a death for which three individuals claim responsibility. Could have fooled me. :)

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## **Sheila says**

Amanda gets caught up in the family drama of one of her students that results in the murder of her students father

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## **Rena Sherwood says**

Before there was Lisa Scottoline and the Rosato and Associates mystery series, there was Amanda Pepper. Both series are set in Philadelphia, which sometimes becomes more of another character than a mystery series setting. This is the first Amanda Pepper book I've read and I'm impressed enough to pursue other books in the series.

This is a good whydunnit, which is more difficult to figure out than WHOdunnit. This also has some recurring elements that do not interfere with the solving of the mystery, such as Amanda Pepper's relationship with a detective that was born in New Orleans (I think) but wound up somehow working in Philadelphia.

I don't think you need to read the first book in the series **Caught Dead in Philadelphia** to understand what's going on here but I'm curious enough to see the details behind the hints dropped in this book.

The only problem I had with the book was that the contrast in emotional feel were at times very out of place. It would go from funny, funny, funny to amazingly creepy sad and then swing back to funny. That got to be rather jarring.

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## **mary says**

Sandy Clausen is a revolting Santa Claus, but the danger to Amanda comes from another quarter

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## **Reenie says**

I just re-read this book and enjoyed it, some of it may be a little dated, and Amanda seems a little preachy now. However, being a long time Philly girl, Gillian Roberts does an excellent job of capturing the feel of the city in 70 and 80's Brought back memories with the Wanamaker's Eagle and the Woolworth counter (near where I worked). I will definately re-read the rest of the series as it is on Kindle now.

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