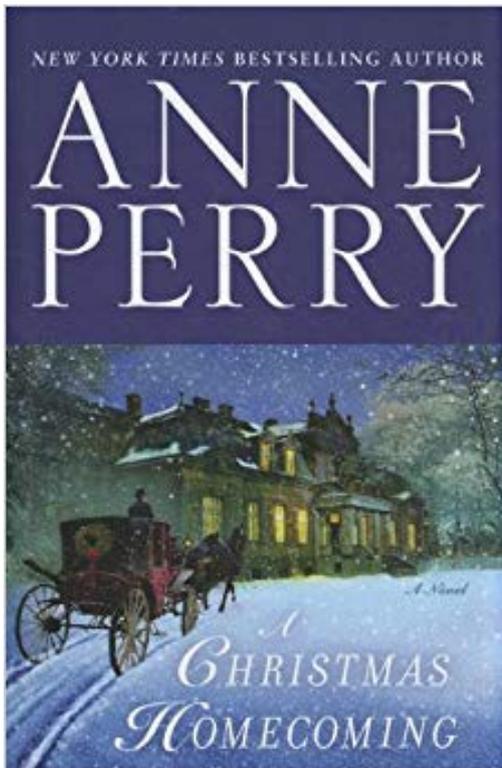


A Christmas Homecoming (Thorndike Press Large Print Basic) by Anne Perry



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Traveling up the Yorkshire coast with her husband and his acting troupe, Caroline, the mother of Charlotte Pitt, anticipates their arrival at the famed fishing village landing sight of Count Dracula in Bram Stoker's tale and develops an awareness about inviting and disallowing evil. (mystery & detective).



Reviews of the A Christmas Homecoming (Thorndike Press Large Print Basic) by Anne Perry

Ohatollia

This is my first Anne Perry novel, but it certainly won't be my last. Despite my title, I want to say that I actually enjoyed the book. I was looking for a small diversion to read for the holidays. I have known about Anne Perry, but I've never gotten around to reading any of her works. Then I found out that she writes an annual Christmas mystery, that is usually a stand alone novel. Plus, being relatively short, I thought this would be a great introduction into her world and I was quite pleased. The characters are interesting and being a lover of classic, cozy mysteries, the setting (an isolated, snowbound mansion), was just too perfect. The book made me want to check out the other titles in this series. Charlotte is a great character, and an ideal amateur detective. The other characters are true cliches, but are also well written. In fact, in a mystery novel, you want cliches: the mysterious stranger, the wealthy, if narrow-minded lord and his put-upon, mousy wife. The actor with a big ego, etc. There's nothing wrong with any of this, it's what mystery readers expect. Anne Perry delivers all of this, in a nice little package. I would also add, if you are a fan of the novel Dracula, or at least have a general idea of the novel, this book is even more interesting. I found that I enjoyed watching the actors come up with ways to perform certain scenes, to try and make a workable play out of the book. In fact, once the murder is committed and the troupe decides that the show can't go on, I found I was a little disappointed. Now for some of the bad points. First, except for the snowstorm, there is nothing really to do with Christmas in this book. The house doesn't even decorate, due to the tragedy. It makes sense, but I was hoping that the mix of Christmas and Halloween (in the play of Dracula) would be an interesting twist, but the book leans more towards the play than the holiday. Again, this isn't really a bad thing, I was just hoping for more. The actual let down for me was in the solving of the crime. I don't know how the solutions to her other novels work out, but as a mystery reader, I have to cry "no fair" with this solution. I enjoy "fair play" clues, that the reader can use to guess at the solution. I don't mind being fooled, but I do want clues in my mystery. The fact that the solution comes about because our detective remembers something from her past, doesn't sit well with me. At least this past episode should have somehow been written earlier in the book for the reader to understand. Maybe a passing mention of the person's name and the past crime associated with them. And still, with all that, not enough evidence to charge the guilty party. Perhaps you have to read the rest of the series? Maybe this past crime has been detailed in a previous novel, but still a recap of some sort should then have been used. Yes, justice prevails and everything is wrapped up in a neat little package for Christmas, but I was just expecting a little better. Still, Anne Perry has a nice writing style, the characters are fun and well developed and she has a firm grasp on the period. Like I said, a pleasant read, but a little disappointed with the mystery. Still, I look forward to reading more in these series.

Skillet

I've read several of Anne Perry's short stories along with a handful of both the Pitt/Monk series, and while I've always been impressed with her ability to, on a regular basis, generate both unusual and intriguing plots, I've always felt that her execution of those plots were either exceptionally well done or very poor. This little novella, however, was by far one of her best. Not only did the premise exceed my expectations, blending elements of the supernatural, but she blew me away with her use of the Christmas theme, focusing on the potential for good and evil in all of us as it related to the unconventional play being rehearsed by a troupe of actors stranded in a country manor over the holidays.

The pacing throughout was a bit slow, which is why I've reduced my rating to four stars (technically, I'd give it 4.5) since despite my interest, found the slow moving story lagging at times. Although the appearance of Mr Ballin, the mysterious stranger that disarranges the lives of the players for good or worse, was not only a shot in the arm for this book, he is an intriguing, likeable and vivid character who came alive on the page. After his arrival, 'A Christmas Homecoming' only gets more atmospheric, thought provoking - and honestly while not always done in the style of a traditional mystery, I did not mind the deviations from the genre at all. Perry utilizes the theme of Christmas time not in your average way - there are no traditional Victorian celebrations of the season in here. Instead, she forces the reader to think along with the characters and from that I took away more than just an enjoyable story.

The climax was short, yes, but somehow it managed to be all the more powerful for that. When I'd read the last line and closed this book, I shivered. This was a provocative read, well written, and I always do appreciate Perry's gift for imposing the reader in the 19th century. An excellent novella, and very highly recommended. In fact, I finished this last night and am already trying to loan my copy to anyone willing to read it!

Niwiold

I have now read the first nine of Anne Perry's Christmas mysteries, and this is not one of my favorites. There is no mystery until the second half of the book. The first half deals with a theatrical group attempting to produce a play of "Dracula" at a snowbound country estate at Christmastime. The play, written by the daughter of the estate's owner, needs a lot of revision, and the first 120 pages deal with the changes in the production. Anyone fascinated with the Dracula story might enjoy this, but I am not a fan of vampires and I know very little about the characters in "Dracula." Probably for this reason, I found the first half tedious. On page 129, a body is found, and for me, the story picked up when it finally became a whodunit. I was interested in finding the identity of the killer, but unfortunately the solution was totally unmotivated. The reader has no idea about the situation that led to the murder, and there is no way an armchair detective could ever solve this one. Anne Perry has written some good Christmas mysteries--A Christmas Visitor was a favorite of mine--and I suggest readers try one of the others instead of this.

Ranenast

As usual, the author sweeps you up instantly into the setting so you feel the cold and slight discomfort of being snowbound, and you have instant rapport with the characters. It was nice to be reintroduced to Charlotte Pitt's mother with her new circumstance in life. You begin to see where Charlotte's courage to take on the unusual and think through a puzzle may have come from. The present preoccupation with vampires was set into its time as a story and not over-thought or over-gory.

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