



Very Old Bones

William Kennedy

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For **William Kennedy** fans, Albany conjures up a tapestry of great beauty and complexity in which the lives of an Irish American family are woven. Earlier Albany novels, including **Ironweed**, a Pulitzer Prize-winner, whetted our appetites. Now **Very Old Bones** treats us to one last look at the odd and turbulent Phelans, circa 1958. Stretching the boundaries of life as the Phelans know it, this powerful work flows back and forth in time, riding on the melody of its language. Its great theme is the promise of redemption for those who seek it.

Very Old Bones Details

Date : Published April 1st 1993 by Penguin Books (first published 1992)

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Author : William Kennedy

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From Reader Review Very Old Bones for online ebook

Sam Harvey says

For anyone who has read other books in the Albany Cycle, this ties the families together and fills in gaps. It's a great read!

Paul says

This Cat can write. This is the second book I have read in the Albany series and Mr. Kennedy is a gifted storyteller and genius with the written word. One of my new favorite authors.

B. zee says

I have 20 pagees to go but I can't get myself to finish the damn thing. Damn these comics!!!

Jane-Rebecca says

Evidently, I liked this more than one star but, for the life of me, I can't remember reading this.

Kristin says

Completely blown away by the writing! Dazzling with pain, brutal honesty, alluring madness, blind insanity, suffocating families, disaster behind every corner, lives unlived, people unloved, profound love and plunging passions, captivating details and masterful dialogue. I am a believer.

Judy says

The Phelan family history, tied to Albany, NY and supernatural events, form this story of Peter Phelan and his son Orson. They live in the old family home in a declining part of Albany, and inherit family secrets that have impacted the lives of several generations. Some have fled the guilt, others allowed their lives to be formed by it, and others embrace it and learn to find a life in spite of it.

Annie says

Beautiful writing

c2 cole says

This is another book that is difficult to rate using the five star system. My inclination was to give it a 3 or 3.5, yet I've given other books that are not nearly as good that rating due to lack of discrimination in the system.

The writing was excellent and the book was readable for that alone. The story held my interest for the most part. I'd read Ironweed years ago so knew at least Francis, but had not read the other books in the series. Oddly, this reminded me a bit of Richard Russo even though the only real overlap is the area.

Although the characters were interesting, I guess my problem with the book was that they weren't all convincing, or maybe the motives of a few of them seemed stilted, devised for prurient interest. Although I've never felt as if I had to like a character, it did annoy me that halfway through I decided I didn't much like the narrator or his young wife. This book did, though, make me want to find out more about William Kennedy.

Michelle says

"People like the story up to a point, but they think the writing lacks the necessary poetry. And they say it lacks the verve for life, that it's life seen through a black veil of doom." (160)

Very Old Bones was about an Irish American family suffers from trauma of past incidents. Following four different generations in Albany, New York, the author tells the story out of order.

I liked this story up to a certain point. But it was the excess of poetic language tending to be philosophical that made this book a drag for me. It sometimes felt like it was trying too hard to be a deep read. The changing of place and time was confusing because there was usually very little transition from one time to the next. Once in a particular storyline, it was good. I liked learning about how life was for the different members of the Phelan family. However, the tone was so dark and gloomy, so demented, that it just weighed heavy. I will say that the narrator's voice was very clear and made the book sound as though it really were a memoir rather than a piece of fiction.

Brooks Truitt says

The first page is intriguing - it uses future and past tense, third and first person narration by the same narrator. Appears I am coming into a later book in a series so I wonder if I'm going to miss some allusions or information about the family that was already established in one of the earlier books?

Paul Gaya Ochieng Simeon Juma says

Very old bones, reminds me of the very old times. I really enjoyed reading this book. It is beautifully written. One understands the power of words through this book.

Orson the main character narrates the life and times of some of his family members, most of whom have died. We learn of Billy, his cousin, Peter, his father, his uncle Francis, Belinda, his mother and others.

We learn of the madness of each, starting with his grandfather right up to him and Billy. A family torn by the peculiar personality of individuals.

Kevin Kato says

Got a bit lost at times with Kennedy's drifting back and forth in time (testament to my lack of concentration skills more than anything else) but his presentation is quite fascinating. Lyricist as much as story-teller; love his use of language and his insightful musings.

Jen says

a variety of thoughts i had when reading it

- William Kennedy's "very old bones" seems to be the wrap up (of sorts) of the lives of previously written about characters. I read the books about them a long time ago, so following the larger story is kind of null. I find myself referring to the timeline/family tree in the front of the book but that doesn't necessarily help. for instance, one of the characters introduced as a sister isn't on the timeline. is this a mystery to be solved later in the book? a typo? what a heck.

- if "good" art is supposed to make you uncomfortable, than this book is pretty good.

I'm surprised I'm continuing with it.

- too macho for where i'm at lately. a couple of good backstories toward the end but overall, annoying.

Malbadeen says

Whenever I am asked to describe myself or something about myself (i.e. college/work) I always go straight to my various roles in my families:

Daughter of _____ & _____

Sister of _____ & _____ & _____ & _____

Mom to _____ & _____

wife to _____

nieces to 20+ aunts and uncles

etc

It is so rare that I see myself as disconnected to these roles. I'm old enough now to see my families many flaws, eccentricities, and annoyances. One sibling lives in Japan, I see another only a few times a year and my dad passed away 19 years ago but I still feel like every single one of them (including the "aunt" that turned out to not be biologically connected but rather a run-away that found permanent refuge amongst my grandmothers brood) is part of who I am.

And I think that is why I this book captured my attention so strongly. I don't know what the author intended (or more likely didn't intend) to say about family but to me it screamed "you ARE your family - for better or worse...and it's usually worse". And I closed the book and I thought "yep, I totally get that".

or maybe I just liked the cover a lot. Either way, I'm giving it 4 stars.

Joyce says

3 Stars

I gave this book three stars for the language. The language was poetic and descriptive. However, the book itself bore little resemblance to the description listed.

Orson is the narrator who tells the story of an Irish American family, the Phelan's, most of whom are deceased. They all seem more than a little off center so to speak.

The story itself was a little too dark for me to enjoy. It seemed to take off on tangents at times and the transitions weren't all that good.

This is my first book by William Kennedy and I am not sure that I'll look at anything else written by him.

Thanks to Netgalley and Endeavour Press for their advanced copy of this book.
