



Crippen

John Boyne

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July 1910: A gruesome discovery has been made at 39 Hilddrop Crescent, Camden.

Chief Inspector Walter Dew of Scotland Yard did not expect the house to be empty. Nor did he expect to find a body in the cellar. Buried under the flagstones are the remains of Cora Crippen, former music-hall singer and wife of Dr. Hawley Crippen. No one would have thought the quiet, unassuming Dr. Crippen capable of murder, yet the doctor and his mistress have disappeared from London, and now a full-scale hunt for them has begun.

Across the Channel in Antwerp, the S.S. *Montrose* has just set off on its two-week voyage to North America. Slipping in among the first-class passengers is a Mr. John Robinson, accompanied by his teenage son, Edmund. The pair may be hoping for a quiet, private voyage, but in the close confines of a luxury ocean liner, anonymity is rare. And with others aboard looking for romance, or violence, or escape from their past in Europe, it will take more than just luck for the Robinsons to survive the voyage unnoticed.

An accomplished, intricately plotted novel, *Crippen* brilliantly reimagines the amazing escape attempt of one of history's most notorious killers and marks the outstanding American debut of one of Ireland's best young novelists.

Crippen Details

Date : Published (first published 2004)

ISBN :

Author : John Boyne

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Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Mystery, Fiction, Crime

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From Reader Review Crippen for online ebook

Cher says

4 stars - It was great. I loved it.

John Boyne never disappoints, and the only thing better than historical fiction, is historical fiction based on actual events.

Once you have read the book, there is an interesting article with engrossing pictures surrounding what happened here, but I recommend not peeking until after you have read the novel to avoid spoilers!

Favorite Quote: That's the strangest thing about the wealthiest families of Europe: they're all penniless.

First Sentence: She was over 575 feet in length, with a beam almost an eighth of that size.

Carol says

4.5 Stars.

Oh Boy.....CRIPPEN is a dam good murder-mystery and another great read off my list from John Boyne. I really should just leave it at that, but I can't! What is the **real truth** here? And who was this Dr. Hawley Harvey Crippen? (*I see a work of non-fiction in my near future.*)

The story begins with Hawley as a young man leaving home to pursue his dream of becoming a doctor, but with zero dollars from his unsupportive parents, the going gets tough and fabrications result as we meet lots....and lots....of quirky characters on land and at sea aboard the SS Montrose.....and all **before** we even get to the **meat** of Hawley's life.

As we travel from Belgium to Canada in 1910, we discover all passengers are **not** what they seem....and what a cast it is! Mrs. Drake....the upper class snob and ultimate pain in the ass speaks whatever insult comes to her nasty mind....snooty daughter Victoria desperately awaiting her inheritance...and freedom...is out to nail herself a man....and tries with a **big** inviting kiss, hahaha, and the irritable, but observant Captain Kendall plays an important role aboard his ship....as does the defiant, and horny, young Tom who makes a **big** discovery.

Ok.....back to CRIPPEN. At first, I actually felt sorry for him, educating himself through correspondence courses, living in a sparse cellar, working side jobs...one in an abattoir (*ICK!*) to stay afloat....**AND OMGOSH** his wives.....they humiliate and treat him like dirt, degrade and deem him useless publicly, and one is such a nasty vicious hag that, well....you'll see! So many busy-bodies here that set out to cause trouble....and do!

"Some men are simply not supposed to take wives at all."

But....ole Hawley is not an innocent here....not by a long shot! In some ways, he's actually a wimp, and in others....let's just say you wouldn't want to have him for a Doctor or Dentist. Yikes!

CRIPPEN really is a most entertaining read with shockers (*did I mention lots and lots of characters*) great storytelling and, of course, a murder to solve, but again.....just what is the truth here?

Interesting facts about the real case in Author's Notes....but I want more!

Cleo Bannister says

This is now the third book I've read by this author and Crippen is a fictionalised version of the case of Dr Hawley Harvey Crippen and the murder of his wife of which he was convicted and hanged in 1910. It could be said that when you know the ending to a story that it will remove all suspense from the reading (or in my case listening) but this book defies that notion. Yes, I knew that Hawley Crippen's wife Cora was poisoned then dismembered and her torso found under the floor of the cellar of 39 Hilldrop Crescent, Camden and having a somewhat grisly nature I know quite a bit about the events that are considered to lead up to the discovery, but to say I wasn't captivated by John Boyne's interpretation and imagination, would be an outright lie.

The story takes us back to Crippen's earliest days where it appears John Boyne has invented quite a bit to create the most sympathetic view of the child growing into a man who longs to be a doctor. However the story also flips forwards in time to the ship the SS Montrose where John Robinson and his seventeen year old son Edmund board in Antwerp to make the journey to Canada to start a new life. John Robinson is a Doctor and the pair travel first class.

The journey across the Atlantic was probably my favourite part of the whole book. The passengers included the most hideous Antonia Drake and her spoilt daughter Victoria as well as the far more balanced Frenchman Mathieu Zela travelling with his nephew and the unassuming Martha Hayes. There are moments of almost farcical nature as despite the plan to keep a low profile John Robinson is in high demand to socialise with his fellow passengers, as is young Edmund.

Things weren't an awful lot better in the past as we follow Crippen through his apprenticeship in an abattoir to fund his medical diplomas, his first marriage and the beginning of his relationship with Cora, a music hall performer who he eventually moves to England with. I've condensed this to a few sentences but the author carefully lays the basis for the part that all the readers know is on the way, and his answer to the question what led the mild mannered Crippen to butcher Cora and then recklessly move his lover, Ethel Le Neve into Hilltop Crescent? Once again along this tour we meet some truly memorable characters, most of them pretty awful but, oh so entertaining for being so. What struck me most was how much the social rules of the time seem to have played a part in the actual discovery of the murder and the interaction between the friend who first reported her suspicions to the hapless constable at Scotland Yard was one of my favourite scenes.

So yes there is tension, as much about how having started the story with the underdog Crippen we were going to get to the finale of the hanging. I'm not going to dissect this part but I for one wasn't wholly convinced by the explanation, but it was a clever route to take and therefore bearing in mind this is a fictionalised tale, albeit with some of the key players, including Inspector Dew, the plotting was in place so it didn't come out of nowhere; In short if I didn't have my own views it was plausible. But most of all the and the journey both on land and at sea was exceptionally entertaining. The characters from the ship's crew to the minor players really do carry this story especially as we all know the ending!

This isn't a book to read if you want the absolute facts of the case, but if you want to be entertained this is the perfect platform to either take a look at Crippen from a slightly different angle, or simply to read a gripping tale.

I listened to this book in audio format, it had been on my TBR since January 2016 but regular readers will know I repeatedly struggled with listening rather than reading. I'm glad to say this book proved I could do it and the day it ended when I was only halfway through my walk home, I felt utterly bereft after all Crippen had accompanied me on walks and whilst knitting over a total of 17 hours and 43 minutes and I thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it aided by the wonderful narration by James Daniel Wilson.

This is the second fictionalised story I've read about this case, Martin Edwards wrote his version called *Dancing for the Hangman* which I highly recommend.

Tasha says

I love this author's stuff and this book was so good. The writing, the pacing, the historical feel of this story, all of it. I was not familiar the real Dr. Crippen so this read as a bit of a thriller for me as well.

Ariel says

It took me so long to get into this book but I love John Boyne and the faith that it was going to be worth reading kept me going. The novel is a somewhat fictionalized account of famous murderer Hawley Crippen who in the early 1900's killed his wife Cora and buried her in the basement. It was a rather famous case because he was on a boat fleeing when he was recognized and he was the first suspect caught with the aid of wireless telegraphy created by Marconi. Crippen was a pretty run of the mill wife killer but John Boyne really brings the characters to life by fleshing in a lot of backstory and I must say that by the end I was somewhat sympathetic to the plight of Crippen. The main problem for me was the time jumps. At first the book is all over the place with a lot of set up and characters to learn about it. At first I didn't really care about so and so on the boat and I wanted to get into the crime itself. By the time a certain character is revealed to not be who they pretended to be I was hooked. By the time I got past the first 100 pages I was completely invested in to the story. Even though I knew the outline of the Crippen case the book still held a lot of surprises and interesting twists. While the people in the book are long dead and with forensics being what they were at the turn of the century, the facts of the case will never be known. Boyne however presents an entertaining take on a case that has fascinated people for the last 100 years.

Laura says

This took some time to read but it was quite interesting and had some unexpected turn of events. Not my favorite by this author but a very enjoyable read that I would recommend to lovers of historical fiction based on real life events.

Nicole says

This book was right up my alley- a novel inspired by a real-life crime in Victorian England. As it turned out, the story was familiar to me as I'd read Erik Larson's wonderful non-fiction book "Thunderstruck", about Dr. Crippen, a great companion piece to this book. Interesting to read an alternative take on this murder.

B the BookAddict says

Another brilliant read by John Boyne as he takes on the real life figure, Dr Hawley Harvey Crippen and gives us a story about a man behind the reputation. Highly Recommended 4.5★

Gerry says

John Boyne presents us with a fictionalised account of the famous Dr Crippen case of the early 20th century with many of the characters and situations taken from the facts of the case and others created, successfully, to serve the plot.

The book moves seamlessly from one location and one time frame to another, beginning with Crippen and his mistress Ethel LeNeve in Antwerp ready to board the SS Montrose en route to Canada and a new life. To completely set the scene and present a portrait of the artist (!), so to speak, it then flits back to Crippen's far from happy youth in Michigan before arriving in London shortly after the alleged crime has taken place.

From then on locations are visited and lively characters are introduced that make the story quite spellbinding, even if one does already know details of the case. The tension mounts with each turn of the page and in an innovative ending reaches quite a crescendo.

The story as presented does, perhaps surprisingly, leave readers with some sympathy for the protagonists, as even the pursuing Inspector Dew discovered. As such it is a most enjoyable and fascinating tale, extremely well told.

Kell says

Well, where to start? How about with just one word: WOW! Crippen is quite one of the most gripping crime fiction novels I've ever read. That's the short version.

You want the long version? OK, here goes...

This fictionalised account of a real and infamous crime that gripped the English-speaking world is nothing short of brilliant. The characters are sympathetically drawn, yes, even that of Dr Hawley Crippen himself. Boyne has taken one of Britain's most notorious and mysterious killers and made him a human being; one with feelings and troubles with which one can readily identify. The relationship he suffers with his overbearing wife, Cora, makes one wish someone would kill her!

Despite Dr Crippen being a name synonymous with gruesome and grisly murder, mystery and misconception surrounds both the man and the case, so proceedings are not so straightforward as one might expect. Indeed, Boyne manages to keep things suspenseful to the very end, which came as a huge surprise to this reader!

I was completely drawn into the plot and loved the back-and-forth style of storytelling which revealed things little by little, drawing things out in such a way that there was always something unexpected around the corner. Time and again I was delighted by some little twist or turn till the thrilling conclusion which was immensely satisfying.

It's rare that a novel compels me to research a subject further, but this one has had that exact effect. I'm now fascinated by the man and the crime he committed (or did he?), and urge all fans of crime fact and fiction to pick up Crippen as soon as possible. I guarantee you won't be able to put it down till the last page has been turned.

Marita says

This novel is a re-telling of the notorious Crippen murder case. In the factual case **Hawley Harvey Crippen (1862-1910)** was hanged in 1910 for the murder of his wife Cora Crippen (who was also known as Bella Elmore, Cora Turner and who was originally Kunigunde Mackamotski). His co-accused, **Ethel LeNeve** (or Neave) was acquitted. Crippen and LeNeve had in fact travelled to Canada in July, 1910 on board the SS Montrose, and they were apprehended due to the wireless device installed on the ship, the "Marconi telegraph machine". Captain Kendall had recognised the fugitives and he transmitted the information to the British authorities by means of a wireless telegram. This was in fact the first instance where criminals had been apprehended as a result of this device being used. Now, don't get upset. These are not spoilers, but historical facts. However, I'm not going to tell you what John Boyne does with these facts or how he changes them. He provides a "what if it actually happened this way" scenario, and he puts some twists and turns into the story. Now as far as those changes are concerned, my lips are sealed!

John Boyne's story starts as passengers are boarding the SS Montrose. Oh, and what characters they are! Captain Kendall is all for cleanliness, law and order and keeping his ship ship-shape. He is not fond of the female gender, in fact: *"The truth was, he disapproved of women as a gender, considering them entirely surplus to his requirements."* He is ably assisted by First Officer Billy Carter, a stand-in for Kendall's friend Sorensen who had been taken ill. Then there is the odiously overbearing Mrs Drake and her pretty but awful (yes, pretty awful!) daughter Victoria. Mrs Drake is of the opinion: *"And you have to remember that we are Englishwomen. And Englishwomen of a particular class at that. We cannot let ourselves be bullied or taken advantage of by some . . . European."* She spat out the word as if it was a fly she had inhaled. On one occasion aboard *"Mrs Drake had chosen an extravagant dark green dress and a brassiere which practically pushed her breasts over the top of it. They rose upwards as she breathed in and one could almost hear them arguing with each other as to which would be released first."* As another passenger observed about Mrs Drake's voice: *"...She could drown out the engines if she really put her mind to it."* Also on board are Martha Hayes, Mr Robinson and his son Edmund as well as Matthieu Zéla and his nephew the vicious teenage delinquent Tom.

Meanwhile back on land there is another cast of characters, amongst whom Louise Hayes who reports foul play, and Inspector Dew who investigates. *"Dew smiled. 'Dr Crippen,' he said doubtfully. 'It hardly sounds like the name of a wife murderer, now does it?' 'Well, I don't expect they're all called Jack the Ripper, are they?' she asked."* No more details from me, other than mentioning that Inspector Dew behaves in a very

unprofessional manner, first dining with the main suspect, and then providing details of the case to all and sundry. Will Inspector Dew find the culprit(s), or is he not quite as good a sleuth as he thought?

There are several instances of the pot calling the kettle black. In addition, appearances aren't always what they seem, and this is a recurring theme in the novel.

Some of the details of Mr Boyne's version of the murder itself stretched my credulity, but overall it was an entertaining romp. Another bit of nit-picking is this: the reader is told that Cora Crippen's music teacher is Italian: *"An Italian, he had lived in London for almost eight years and coached many aspiring singers and actresses, considering it a personal failure if they did not find success within a year of completing his programme, which included breathing exercises, vocal techniques and seduction by Berlosci himself."* However, for some obscure reason which I couldn't figure out the Spanish appellation of **Señor** Berlosci is used instead of the Italian **Signor** Berlosci. And when this señor who was really a signor said to the woman *"Promissio"??* (for 'I promise') I couldn't quite decide whether he was speaking English and giving it an Italian flavour, or whether he was speaking his native Italian and simply didn't know the correct verb.

More Excerpts:

"“We have some wonderful members. You must know Anne Richardson-Lewis? Of the Richardson-Lewises? And Janet Tyler? She's one of the Tylers?"

'Of course,' lied Cora.

'And Alexandra Harrington is a regular attendee.'

'Is she one of the Harringtons?"

'No. She's one of the other Harringtons.

'Oh, better still. I've always preferred them anyway.'"

"They married and were both disappointed with the results."

"That this was quite contrary to the truth mattered little, for appearances, he had long grown to realize, were the most deceptive of all human traits."

"“As long as you know the truth,' she replied, lying through her teeth."

Picture Gallery: (from Wikipedia)

Hawley Harvey Crippen

Cora Crippen/Bella Elmore

Mike Crippen says

Surprised to see so many positive reviews for this. I found the prose clumsy and obvious a lot of the time, and every single character was one dimensional and prone to illogical and overblown reactions.

More disturbingly, however, is the author's constantly vile descriptions of all his female characters. The utter

lack of redeeming traits in any of the novel's women made me feel unsettled on more than a few occasions.

Aside from this, it rattles along at a fair old pace and provides some basic entertainment on the way. Wasn't convinced by the one of the major plot twists, but seeing as I was already getting disillusioned with the whole thing at this point, that's no great surprise.

Lawyer says

Review to follow.

Denise says

In the cellar of a house in Camden in July 1910, Inspector Walter Dew of Scotland Yard finds the dismembered and buried remains of Cora Crippen, music hall singer and wife of Dr Hawley Crippen. Hawley and his mistress Ethel LeNeve have disappeared without a trace. Shortly afterwards, Captain Kendall of the *SS Montrose* sailing from Antwerp to Canada observes two of his First Class passengers, a Mr John Robinson and his 17-year-old son Edmund, behaving quite unlike the father and son they claim to be. The hunt for Cora Crippen's killer will take Inspector Dew all the way across the Atlantic, but he is determined not to let Dr Crippen slip away.

Based (somewhat loosely) on the true story of Dr Crippen and the gruesome murder of his wife Cora (though to be fair, by the time I was halfway through the book, I would have cheerfully murdered the bitch - or at least her fictional representation here - myself), this was an intriguing read that grips you more and more the further you get. With the chapters jumping between past and present, the truth behind Cora's death unravels slowly and the suspense just keeps on building right until the end. I wasn't familiar with the true story behind the book before reading it, but this was certainly an good introduction to it - with a very interesting twist.

Dem says

This is a novel to burrow into and one for the Autumn / Winter list. My 10th Novel by John Boyne and I really do find that this author has a talent for creating memorable characters and bringing history to live. Pure entertainment and great stroytelling.

Each of his novels are uniquely different, engaging and enthralling and I love picking up a John Boyne Novel as you never really know where his books are going to take you.

I didn't even read the blurb of this novel and was presently surprised when finishing to realise that this was (loosely) based on true events and I really enjoyed my google search to find photos of the people involved.

"July 1910 The Grisly remains of Cora Crippen, music hall singer and wife of Dr Hawley Crippen are discovered in the cellar of 39 Hilldrop Crescent, Camden. But the Doctor and his mistress Ethel Le Neve have vanished much to the frustration of Scotland Yard and the outrage of horrified London

John Boyne is all about the character development and while many of the characters are dislikable they are certainly memorable and vivid. This Novel is quite long at 500 pages and yet it is beautifully paced and the

slow release of the story keeps the reader engaged and in suspense right up until the end. The book moves beautifully from one location and one time frame to another without confusing the reader.

I really enjoyed this one, its an old fashioned style thriller/ historical novel based on an actuary case in history.
