

The background features a complex network of white nodes connected by thin white lines, set against a gradient background that transitions from dark purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. The nodes are scattered across the frame, with some forming larger, more prominent clusters.

Things in Jars

Written by Jess Kidd

Published by PDF Site

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Things in Jars

By Jess Kidd

Things In Jars Review

Bridie Devine, female detective extraordinaire, is confronted with the most baffling puzzle yet: the kidnapping of Christabel Berwick, secret daughter of Sir Edmund Athelstan Berwick, and a peculiar child whose reputed supernatural powers have captured the unwanted attention of collectors trading curiosities in this age of discovery.

Things In Jars Amazon

Winding her way through the labyrinthine, sooty streets of Victorian London, Bridie won't rest until she finds the young girl, even if it means unearthing a past that she'd rather keep buried. Luckily, her search is aided by an enchanting cast of characters, including a seven-foot tall housemaid; a melancholic, tattoo-covered ghost; and an avuncular apothecary. But secrets abound in this foggy underworld where spectacle is king and nothing is quite what it seems.

Things In Jars Ending

Blending darkness and light, history and folklore, Things in Jars is a spellbinding Gothic mystery that collapses the boundary between fact and fairy tale to stunning effect and explores what it means to be human in inhumane times.

Five stars and a statue goes to best portrayed Victorian London book !

This is incredible combination of humor, kitsch, folklore with the writers talented and never ending imagination.

We meet one of the most interesting heroines, Bride Devine , a woman detective, wearing a dagger strapped to her thigh, smoking pipe, solving murders by reading corpses and talking with ghosts. It seems like one of the heroes , also the part of love triangle is Ruby Doyle, champion boxer who is also dead.

Mostly Five stars and a statue goes to best portrayed Victorian London book !

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Mostly it was frivolous book is written with great sense of humor and creativity. But we have to admit that it is also evil one with gory murder scenes , shocking, cruel, disturbing.

I enjoyed the poetic descriptions of Victorian London, immaculate writing and rich, layered, perfectly developed characterization.

So happy to find a gifted writer. Cannot wait to read more books !

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Things In Jars Pdf

Jess Kidd shifts direction in her 3rd novel setting it in Victorian times with its inherent brutality and inhumanity, teeming with villains, murderers, the arrogance of killing medics, and ruthless amoral gentlemen anatomy collectors, hungry for what should not be alive. There are Things in Jars, with their ability to disturb the natural order of things, life and death, ashes to ashes, time in suspension, pickling yesterday, holding eternity in a jar. Into this latest historical novel, Kidd Jess Kidd shifts direction in her 3rd novel setting it in Victorian times with its inherent brutality and inhumanity, teeming with villains, murderers, the arrogance of killing medics, and ruthless amoral gentlemen anatomy collectors, hungry for what should not be alive. There are Things in Jars, with their ability to disturb the natural order of things, life and death, ashes to ashes, time in suspension, pickling yesterday, holding eternity in a jar. Into this latest historical novel, Kidd brings her trademark elements, Irish folklore, superstitions, ghosts, the eccentric, her stellar female characters, with her standout lyrical prose that enchants and enthralls. It is 1863 and London is marked by crime, disease, grime, violence, stink and penury. Addicted to smoking experimental concoctions by Prudhoe in her pipe, the red haired Bridie Devine is haunted by her inability to prevent the death of a child in her last case. With her now battered reputation, it is a surprise when Sir Edmund Berwick hires her to find his kidnapped 6 year old daughter, Christobel.

Only Christobel is no ordinary child, with extraordinary abilities, playing with memories, eyes that see too much, and pike's teeth that can wreak serious damage. This time Bridie is determined not to fail a child, aided by her magnificently gigantic maid, Cora, endowed with her thick and glossy facial hair, and the ghost of the love lorn illustrated Ruby, a prizefighter, claiming to know Bridie, although she is doubtful of this fact. In a narrative that goes back and forth in time to reveal Bridie's childhood of coming over from Ireland, collecting corpses with Gan, and her time as laboratory assistant to Dr John Eames at Albery Hall, wearing the clothes of the dead Lydia, links poke their heads from Bridie's past to trouble her in her present investigations. There are colourful characters galore, such as the predatory and sly Mrs Bibby, born for bad business, with the tooth and claws and the backbone for it, and the viciously dangerous and manipulative Gideon. In a story that takes in walled in women and children and 'the Winter Mermaid'™, there are gruesome murders, double dealing and avarice, and Bridie's life is endangered as a deadly foe comes back from the dead. In the meantime, Londoners cower with fear and horror as lost rivers are resurgent, battered by never ending biblical rains as the city floods.

Once again, Jess Kidd beguiles and charms with her gifts as a storyteller, her shift to the Victorian era is a sublime decision, as the era positively drips with gothic elements that serve a veritable feast for Kidd's imagination. This includes the ravens, experimental potions, the penchant for curiosities, a medical profession that is unhindered by anything remotely ethical, and the corrupt 'scientific' anatomy collectors desperate to acquire living anomalies by any means necessary and preserve them in their jars. However, it is in the mix of the fantastical, Irish folklore such as the merrow, with the everyday, and Kidd's remarkable talents in characterisation that make her novels a joy to read, and ensures that her readership will continue to grow. This is compulsive and magical reading fare, such infernally dark matter, but shot through with light by Bridie, Cora, Ruby and Inspector Valentine Rose. I cannot describe

Things in Jars

how keen I am to get my hands on the next book Kidd writes. So, what is left to say? Just the small matter of this book coming highly recommended! Many thanks to Canongate for an ARC. ...more

Here is time held in suspension. Yesterday pickled. Eternity in a jar.

In Things in Jars, A 7-foot tall bearded parlor maid, mythical sea monsters, a ghost, and a winter mermaid are all brought together by a female pipe-smoking detective in Victorian London to solve the kidnapping of a mysterious child.

When a child with supposed supernatural powers is kidnapped, Detective Bridie Devine is commissioned to find her. Bridie's sleuthing abilities lead her into the dark underbelly of 19th-century London where she encounters a criminal element obsessed with possessing the world's oddities. Dead or alive, there is a price on the head of those who are different and don't fit societal norms. Here is time held in suspension. Yesterday pickled. Eternity in a jar.

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Part mystery, part social commentary, part fairy tale, Things in Jars had me completely enthralled. Jess Kidd encompasses all of the strange eccentricities of the Victorians. In Bridie, Ruby, a dead boxer, and Cora, a 7-foot tall parlor maid, she creates fascinating and multi-dimensional characters. I hope to see them again in a future novel. Kidd seamlessly weaves together a story filled with magic, strong women, and those who long to possess those who are different. I LOVED loved loved every minute of this book. It is strange, eccentric, and wonderfully weird!

This is definitely one of the best books I have read in 2019!

I received an ARC of this book from NetGalley and the publisher in exchange for an honest review. ...more

Things In Jars Release Date

Below her, streets and lanes, factories and workhouses, parks and prisons, ground houses and tenements, roofs, chimneys and treetops. And the winding, sometimes shining, Thames- the sky's own dirty mirror. The raven leaves the river behind and charts a path to a chapel on a hill with a spire and a clock tower. She circles the chapel and lands on the roof with a shuffling of wings. She pecks at brickwork, at lichen, at moth casts, at nothing. She sidles up to a gargoyle and runs her beak affectionately around his eyes, nudging, scooping.

Bridie Devine is a young Irishwoman, not the flinching kind, who works as a detective, aided by her faithful housekeeper, Cora, and offering an often exasperating help to Inspector Rose. Brightest than the blazing flame, determined and dedicated, she is called to investigate the disappearance of Christabel. A child that has the power to enter your conscience just by looking at you with eyes that change colours. Bridie enters a world of illegal medical research, anatomists, and legends and faces the darkest aspects of her childhood, aided by a mysterious rugged man with a top hat who happens to be...dead.

What follows is my personal blabbering, full of adoration for London, Gothic atmosphere, mermaids and the intention to build a bookcase shrine to properly worship Jess Kidd's extraordinary talent. You have been warned!

The woman is made of boot polish and pipe smoke, clean cloth and the north wind. And as for the dead man walking behind her, well, he means no harm.

London is the central character. It comes alive through the pages. I don't know, Jess Kidd has a supernatural gift. I don't know how else to explain her ability to hypnotize the reader. She has created an elaborate time machine to transport us to London during the 1860s. We walk and see and smell and listen. It couldn't be more real than that. The multicultural neighborhoods of the capital, the dreadful orphanages vividly described by Dickens, Trollope, and Thackeray, the ever-present threat of cholera, the mysterious nights, the penny dreadfuls' scenery. And most importantly, Old Father Thames stands witness to a city that retains so many secrets, so many horrors, and so much beauty. The marvelous way in which Kidd leads the readers in the streets and alleys of the city reminded me of Michel Faber's masterpiece *The Crimson Petal and the White*.

I mean, read these paragraphs!

Things in Jars

~The metropolis isn't sleeping, not really. For every Londoner in bed there are ten awake and up to no good - on the fly, on the loose, on the tiles! The moon knows; she sees all. Tonight, she's our guide, for it's late and every self-respecting raven will be perched in her own black-feathered embrace. Let the corvid sleep! The moon sees the beauty and cruelty of London: her whores and drunks, saints and murderers, thieves and lovers and fighters. The moon sees every black alley and yard, scrubland and marsh.

~Coming up from beneath London's streets, another new sound: a tumultuous rushing. The ancient rivers of London, newly awoken and gathering force, now erupt. Flooding lane and street, drowning basement-dwelling families and overwhelming cesspits. Then there is the rain. Great drops of the stuff, a constant patter on every window and shutter, tin can and bucket. And the Thames keeps rising.

And then, the Gothic elements are used to perfection. There are traces of witchcraft and potential hauntings. Strange things in jars, the circus world with its peculiars. Anatomists struggling to learn and to deceive. Stories of mermaids from Ireland, Holland, and France. The presence of the merrow, the evil mermaid, a figure we don't often witness in Literature. Pigeons and seagulls form common imagery throughout the novel, creating a sense of unrest and eerie commotion. There is a tale within the tale and the effect is astonishing, it will give you nightmares. There's even a reference to Herne the Hunter, a legendary British Folklore figure.

And the characters? Nevermind the perfect prose, the beautiful dialogue, the astonishing imagery. Bridie...Jesus Christ, I could highlight every sentence she utters, she is my new spirit animal. From beloved Wicklow. Sassy and ferocious, with an acute sense of irony, indifferent to all norms and rules. How can I not adore her? Cora, loyal, fierce, honest and sensitive. And Ruby...Ruby stands equal to Himself's Mahony in terms of charm level, all handsome and valiant and electrifying. Bridie and Ruby are one of the best, most unique, most perfect (I could go on forever!) couples you'll ever encounter in a novel.

Is this the best Jess Kidd novel yet? I think so. I adore all three but this one truly captured my heart, put it in a chest and hid the key. In a jar. When perfect writing, outstanding atmosphere, and sheer literary Art come together, the result is a masterpiece like Things In Jars.

Also, Jess Kidd, why are you so perfect?

~Bridie walks between the headstones, the crosses, the covered urns, the plump marble pillows inviting everlasting slumber. [...] Stone angels perch on all four corners of her tomb: wings folded and faces impassive, they are giving nothing away.

My reviews can also be found on <https://theopinionatedreaderblog.wordpress.com/> ...more

4.5 STARS

Things in Jars

A dark, bizarre and fanciful world

Imaginative storytelling that was menacing, detailed and plotted to perfection.

I was quickly captivated by the gothic setting and the missing child investigation. The female detective, Birdie Devine specializes in domestic investigations and minor surgery. She was a fantastic character that brought humor and humanity to the tale.

The supernatural elements and fairytale esque cast of characters kept me glued to the pages and immersed in their quest for 4.5 STARS

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The supernatural elements and fairytale esque cast of characters kept me glued to the pages and immersed in their quest for the "Winter Mermaid". The images of snails, scales and those "things in jars" were mesmerizing. I also learned about merrows, which both fascinated and terrified me!

A splash of magical realism, some wicked happenings and plenty of side characters to love/hate made this one quite a fantastical journey!

Thanks to NG and the pub for my review copy. OUT Feb 2020

...more

Things In Jars Publisher

A cloth covers the jar that Bridie took from the bookcase in the nursery, and Ruby is thankful for this. For the contents have the ability to rearrange even a dead mans sense of reality. As with all terrible, wondrous sights, there is a jolt of shock, then a hypnotic fascination, then the uneasy queasiness, then the whole thing starts again; the desire to look and the desire never to have looked in the first place. 1860s London, the prime of the Victorian age. About fifteen years before A cloth covers the jar that Bridie took from the bookcase in the nursery, and Ruby is thankful for this. For the contents have the ability to rearrange even a dead man's sense of reality. As with all terrible, wondrous sights, there is a jolt of shock, then a hypnotic fascination, then the uneasy queasiness, then the whole thing starts again; the desire to look and the desire never to have looked in the first place. 1860s London, the prime of the Victorian age. About fifteen years before Sherlock Holmes begins using his talents to suss truth from mystery, Bridie applies her peculiar talents to helping the police in cases of an unusual nature. A sign outside her door announces: Mrs Devine

Domestic Investigations

Minor surgery (Esp. Boils, Warts, Extractions)

Discretion Assured but she is known mostly for her ability to discern the cause of death, when simple observation will not suffice. She would do as well with a sign that says Investigator of the Bizarre. Her Scotland Yard contact and sometime employer is one Inspector Valentine Rose, and business is brisk. London is awash with the freshly murdered. Bodies appear hourly, blooming in doorways with their throats cut, prone in alleyways with the head knocked in. Half-burnt in hearths and garroted in garrets, folded into trunks or bobbing about in the Thames, great bloated shoals of them. She is called on to look into inexplicable deaths, primarily among the flotsam of society. London has been undergoing the installation of a world class sewer system, and diggings have turned up some extremely cold cases. The latest calls her to a crypt in Highgate Chapel. A mother and child have been unearthed, the child having significant bodily abnormalities. Around the same time, a dodgy-seeming doctor comes a-calling, seeking her assistance on behalf of his patron, Sir Edmund Athestan Berwick. Seems the baronet's daughter has been kidnapped. Going to the police is not really an option. And the game is afoot. Any chance the two cases are linked?

Jess Kidd - image from Metro

The purloined child, Christabel, has some peculiarities of her own.

The man, looking up, hesitates and the child bites him, a nip of surprising sharpness. He pulls his hand away in surprise and sees a line of puncture holes, small but deep. The man stands, dazed, flexing his hand. Red lines track from palm to wrist to elbow, the teeth marks turn mulberry, then black. What kind of child bites like this, like a rat? He imagines her venom he feels it coursing through him. A blistering poison spreads, a sudden fire burning itself out as it travels. All- the time the creature watches him, her eyes darkening a trick of lamplight, surely!...He would scream if he could, but he can only reach out. He lies gasping like a landed fish. Poor unfortunate soul.

Image from The Times

With Sherlockian insight, a talent for disguises, and lots of shoe leather, Bridie sets about following leads and examining clues trying to get to the bottom of a case that is unusually fishy. Like that later consulting detective, Bridie smokes a pipe, which is often enlivened by substances other than pure tobacco, things with names such as Mystery Caravan or Fairground Riot, concocted by Dr. Rumhold Fortitude Prudhoe, a close friend. She shares her quarters with a particularly helpful assistant, the seven-foot-tall Cora Butter, who asks more than once whether Bridie would like this or that person held upside down. The medical bag Bridie totes is her own. The other frequent companion in her investigations is a dead man. While on the job at Highgate Chapel, he first appeared to her in the attached graveyard, notable not only for his transparency, but for his indecorous attire. Ruby Doyle had been a renowned boxer in his day, and appears in shorts, shirtless, sporting a cocked top hat, an impressive handlebar moustache, muscles aplenty, and a considerable number of tattoos, with peculiarities all their own. He seems to know Bridie quite well. One of the mysteries of the book is why she does not seem to remember him, particularly as she finds him very, very attractive.

Tom Hardy - add a handlebar moustache, top hat, and some more tats, and Kidd sees him as Ruby

The supporting cast is a delight. Lee refers to those who work with her as Bridie's Victorian A-team. Beyond those noted above there is a criminal circus owner with a weakness for strong women, psycho killers of both the male and female persuasion, a misshapen sniveling abettor who could have snuck out of a Dickens novel to put some time in here, an honorable street urchin, orphans, a mysterious woman who may be haunting the baronet, and plenty more.

The story is told in two timelines. Bridie investigates the taking of Christabel in 1863, and we get looks back into Bridie's childhood from 1837 to 1843, the earlier period explaining much of what is to come twenty years later. And explaining how Bridie came to have the skills she possesses. Bridie was born in Ireland, like the author, but I expect Jess Lee's transition to life in London was a tad less fraught.

Image from Foodiggity.com

Among other things, Kidd is interested in presenting a realistic portrait of the period. (I'd wanted to give a basis of a real, gritty, accurate portrayal of Victorian London.) Visually, she offers panoramic looks through the dark eyes of ravens, and Bridie's pedestrian peregrinations, particularly through less-than-posh parts of the city. She offers a particularly effective olfactory perspective as well. Breathe in—but not too deeply. Follow the fulsome fumes from the tanners and the reek from the brewery, butterscotch rotten, drifting across Seven Dials. Keep on past the mothballs and the cheap

Things in Jars

tailor's and turn left at the singed silk of the maddened hatter. Just beyond, you'll detect the unwashed crotch of the overworked prostitute and the Christian sweat of the charwoman. On every inhale a shifting scale of onions and scalded milk, chrysanthemums and spiced apple, broiled meat and wet straw, and the sudden stench of the Thames as the wind changes direction and blows up the knotted backstreets. Above all, you may notice the rich and sickening chorus of shit. She was greatly influenced by journalist William Mayhew's encyclopedic 1851 book *London Labour and the London Poor*. There is a look at the jailhouse, which appears to be guarded by particularly corrupt versions of Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum. Toss in, (or dig up) some resurrectionists, too. Part of the Victorian culture was a craze for collecting exotic things. One story that fed her interest was that of The Irish Giant, an exceptionally tall gent (7'7") who became the talk of London for a brief time. But after his early demise, and despite his specific instructions to the contrary, his remains were obtained by a collector and put on display. There is a link to this tale in EXTRA STUFF.

Image from Traveldarkly.com

Lee is also interested in Irish folklore and partakes of that richly for the core element of the story. The incorporation of this element brings with it the main fantasy strand of the novel. One look at the cover of the book will inform you that there be mermaids (or something akin) here. Lee adds additional magical elements, as such critters appear here to have considerable power to influence the world about them, and specific powers that we would never associate with *The Little Mermaid*, although, considering the things we see in jars, we might have to reconsider the implications of the song *Part of Your World*:

Look at this stuff

Isn't it neat?

Wouldn't you think my collection's complete?

Wouldn't you think I'm the girl

The girl who has ev'rything?

Look at this trove

Treasures untold

How many wonders can one cavern hold?

Lookin' around here you'd think

(Sure) she's got everythingHmmmmmm.

Image from Klyker.com

There is considerable humor in *Things in Jars*. Her spectacularly ugly bonnet is curled up before the fire, bristling with feathers. She refused to give it up into the hands of the butler. Not that the butler was overeager to take it. If it comes alive, Sir Edmund thinks, he will do for it with the poker. My particular LOL favorite is the prayer young Bridie offers up at bedtime. God grant eternal rest to Mammy, Daddy, James, John, Theresa, Margaret, Ellen, and little baby Owen. God grant that bastard Paddy Fadden a kick up his hole and severe death to him and his gang, of a slow and terrible variety. How could you not

Things in Jars

absolutely love such a child?

The disappointments in Things in Jars were few. I wish there had been more provision of clues throughout the book about what the deal was with Ruby. I was ok with the explanation, but it needed a better support structure. A bit more background on Cora would have been welcome. One actual gripe was a scene in which Bridie falls asleep while on the job. No way would this have happened. Boo! Almost all the violence occurs off-stage. In addition to one event described in a quote from the book in the review, we are shown the beginning of one attack by a ruffian on a lady. Tender souls might turn away. That's really about it for such things.

Image from Nickcook.net

But the delights in Things in Jars could fill a wing of the British Museum. Bridie is a delicious lead, tough as nails without being impervious, bright, with a solid background that explains how she knows what she knows. She is a lot of fun to follow. The Holmesian parallels are a treat. The supporting cast is like a three-ring circus, in the best possible way, diverse, interesting, and fun to watch (both the light and the dark). We feel the fear when appropriate, and see Bridie's affection for Ruby grow. A taste of Irish folklore is both creepy and educational, and Lee's portrait of 19th century London offers an exceptionally immersive experience. You really get a feel (and smell) of being there. A real-world mystery with fabulous elements of fantasy. In short, Things in Jars is an absolute delight. For the hours you are reading this book you will be part of that world.

Review posted " January 17, 2020

Publication date " February 4, 2020

I received an ARE of this book from Atria in return for some specimens I have been keeping in a special place in the lab basement for some years. They promised to return them after a thorough examination.

=====EXTRA STUFF

Links to the author's personal, Twitter, Goodreads, Instagram and FB pages

Interviews

----Savidge Reads - Sinister & Supernatural Shenanigans with Jess Kidd - by Simon Savidge

----Stitcher - S3E4 " Chatting with Jess Kidd - audio " 1:29:12 " by Tim Clare " you can safely begin at about 46:00 for a focus on Jars

----Well, not an interview, really, but a piece Kidd wrote for LitHub on her favorite ghost stories - Books That Blur the Lines Between Living and Dead

Things in Jars

Items of Interest

- Waterstones - A look at the Operating Theater - Kidd gives a tour
- Writing i.e. - On Writing Things in Jars by Jess Kidd
- Gutenberg - London Labour and the London Poor (1851) by William Mayhew
- Joseph Bazalgette - engineer of the massive sewer works in London
- Otherworldly Oracle - Mermen Legends. " a fun bit of fluff
- Wikipedia - The Irish Giant ...more

My first five star read of 2020

From the first sentence, you know this book is going to be different. As pale as a grave grub, she's an eyeful. The writing is just gorgeous, in that Victorian, Dickensian fashion. Think Dickens matched with Grimms Fairy Tales. Or Dickens if he was smoking hashish (or one of Prudhoses blends) and into Irish folktales.

I loved the characters: Bridie, part sleuth, part doctor (untrained), Cora, her seven foot maid with a beautiful baritone voice and Ruby, a dead boxer My first five star read of 2020

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I loved the characters: Bridie, part sleuth, part doctor (untrained), Cora, her seven foot maid with a beautiful baritone voice and Ruby, a dead boxer with living tattoos. London is a character in its own right. Yes, there is a supernatural element here, of which I usually am not a fan. But Kidd has managed to create a world so believable, that I swallowed it hook, line and sinker.

There's a sly sense of humor here, mostly in the descriptions. While the theme of the book is dark, it's just so darn entertaining. The story has Bridie being hired to find the kidnapped daughter of a baronet. But not just any daughter, this daughter has special characteristics. We are led into a world filled with grave robbers, anatomists, collectors of all things odd and unique.

Kudos to Kidd for getting it all right. I haven't read her prior books, but I'm now inspired to seek them out.

A huge thanks to netgalley and Atria books for an advance copy of this book. ...more

Things In Jars Sequel

2.5/2.75 rounded up

Bridie Devine is a female detective in Victorian London. One day she is approached to investigate the case of a missing girl, Christabel - the secret child of Sir Edmund Athelstan Berwick. She is reported to have supernatural powers. Bridie is hot on the case; she lost her last missing child and is determined to save this one. Her search for the girls is aided by her seven-foot-tall housemaid, and a tattoo covered ghost.

Sounds interesting, right? Well, it was...but there is a 2.5/2.75 rounded up

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Sounds interesting, right? Well, it was...but there is a big BUT coming...it didn't work that well for me. Add me to the outlier group. I found this to be okay at best. I am usually able to suspend disbelief and enjoy books with ghosts, supernatural elements and such. This book was an odd one and hard for me to rate. I never wanted to stop reading it and in fact, I was compelled to keep reading to find out what was going to happen, and mainly, to find out if Bridie would learn how (if) she knew Ruby.

So how does one rate a book which is oddly compelling, atmospheric, weird, with interestingly strange characters with a story line which fails to wow you. I'm going with three stars. This book is imaginative, poetic at times, compelling and I'm going with strange again. I did enjoy Bridie's character and enjoyed her interactions with Ruby. I enjoyed Cora as well. But the story itself, failed to wow me. Can't quite put my finger out it, except to say that we all can't love the same books and some books work for us while others do not. This is right there in the middle for me.

Others are enjoying this more than I did, and I encourage you to seek out their reviews as well.

Thank you to Atria books and NetGalley who provided me with a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. All the thoughts and opinions are my own.

**This was a Traveling Friends/Sisters Buddy Read ...more

BOTM pick January 2020!

Things in Jars

Absolutely breathtaking. I must read more from Jess Kidd ASAP! While the mystery of the disappeared girl is front and foremost in this tale, I felt that the idea of our fascination with creatures and humans different from the norm, and our desire to contain them, was a huge theme explored as well. This was a timely, thought-provoking read, and although it took me a bit to get through this one, it was well worth the time taken to read it.

*Many thanks to the publisher for BOTM pick January 2020!

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Things In Jars Barnes And Noble

Meeting Birdie Devine, a female investigator, who in 1863 receives an offer from a baronet to find his kidnapped daughter, was a pleasure. More than that, I was delighted to get acquainted with her and follow her efforts to uncover the truth behind the abduction. She is observant, intelligent, has no fear of the dead or alive, with one exception, perhaps, and she has been through a lot in life. And she is accompanied by a former boxer who, though dead, gives some advice, occasionally.

I loved Meeting Birdie Devine, a female investigator, who in 1863 receives an offer from a baronet to find his kidnapped daughter, was a pleasure. More than that, I was delighted to get acquainted with her and follow her efforts to uncover the truth behind the abduction. She is observant, intelligent, has no fear of the dead or alive, with one exception, perhaps, and she has been through a lot in life. And she is accompanied by a former boxer who, though dead, gives some advice, occasionally.

I loved everything about this mixture of HF, fantasy and gothic elements. The narration is exquisite, and the things we learn about Birdie's past definitely add to the atmosphere in the novel. All characters are vividly described, each with the characteristics that make them peculiar and particular. There is no character which is unnecessary, and the way Ms Kidd connects them is brilliant. Birdie is a survivor, created by what she experienced and by whom she met in the past. I love Birdie!

When I saw the title of this book months ago, I immediately thought of the macabre the Victorians were so interested in, and it turned out, I was right. This novel has Victorian touch of the highest quality, and I truly recommend it to anyone eager to dive into a terrific read.

Many thanks to Jess Kidd, Atria Books and NetGalley for arc in exchange for my honest review.

...more

But a mermaid has no tears, and therefore she suffers so much more.

Hans Christian Andersen, The Little Mermaid

I'm a huge fan of Jess Kidd's exquisite, playful writing and KERPOW, what a start! Her vivid prologue was one of the finest things I've read in a long, long time. Gadzooks! That alone was worth the entrance fee.

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The book is set in a Victorian London that Dickens might have portrayed: one which is theatrically grotesque and wonderfully atmospheric - whose slums are as lively as a blanket full of lice. Our heroine

Things in Jars

is special detective Bridie Devine, a dynamic pipe-smoking woman of around thirty years of age. She wears the ugliest bonnet in Christendom and can drink most men under the table.

Ms Devine - womankind's answer to Sherlock Holmes - has a psychic talent for reading corpses that have met with inexplicable deaths. The author describes her as being a 'woman made from boot polish and pipe smoke' (Kidd's female characters are often gloriously independent, which I love).

Devine's latest case is the kidnapping of Baronet's daughter, Christabel Berwick, a pike-toothed child who smells of the sea and is kept shackled and hidden in a locked nursery.

The magical realism herein is precisely as it should be - dark, imaginative, irreverent and wryly amusing. To explain this thriller/mystery any further would be to divulge its silty, slippery secrets.

It rather frustrates me that certain ham-handed authors find themselves on Booker shortlists when Å¼ber-talented Jess Kidd can write their socks off. Mind you, that said, I'm not altogether sure why she felt the need to hyphenate words that shouldn't be hyphenated: church-yard; crest-fallen; dumb-founded; gas-lights! Perhaps she was going for a Victorian style of writing?

Disappointingly, the story began to lose its cut and thrust in the middle stages. I was even (gulp) bored for several chapters. The treacherous ocean had become a gentle millpond and I wanted more. Ah, but wonderful Jess Kidd redeems herself with a poignant scene at the book's dénouement; a passage so pitiful, so heroic, that the scales on the back of my neck stood on end and my gills began to gasp. "Bravo, Jess!" I squeaked, clapping my fins together.

Best supporting character awards go to two protags; one living, one dead: Cora Butter, Bridie's seven-foot-tall housemaid, who is fiercely loyal and commendably noble; and to Ruby Doyle, a top-hatted prizefighter whose sliding tattoos have a mind of their own.

As ever, Jess Kidd's lyrical prose is a joy to behold and she employs an opulence of literary devices to good effect: personification; aphorisms; allusion and zoomorphism, to name but a few.

All told, I liked this dark, exuberant, whimsical extravaganza very much. Indomitable Bridie Devine is a mesmerising character who will linger in your mind long after the final page is turned. Nevertheless, I enjoyed this author's previous offerings more.

Four stars, bumped up to five, because Jess Kidd has ninja writing skillz. ...more

Things In Jars Epub

Jess Kidd is now officially one of my most favourite authors. Three beautiful books in a row with not a fault in any of them. What more to ask for.

Things in Jars moves us away from the author's usual locations in Ireland and off to London. Of course our main characters are still beautifully Irish and, also of course, one of them is a ghost. Kidd describes Victorian London perfectly with all its horrors and its smells and its poverty among the lower classes.

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Her characters too are all larger than life. Bridie Devine, the finest female detective of the time, takes on a case of a stolen child who turns out to be a very unusual child indeed. Helping her in the search is Ruby Doyle, champion boxer, now deceased but not yet resting in peace, and Cora Butter "the only, and most terrifying, seven-foot-tall housemaid in London."

The story goes into some very dark places but it is also humourous, totally entertaining and very well written. A really excellent and very readable book. I loved it. ...more

Things In Jars starts off with Bridie, a private detective, being presented with a most baffling case. Sir Berwick's daughter has been kidnapped and he wants her found, but he won't share any relevant information with Bridie, including why he keeps her hidden away. So what's Sir Berwick hiding? The more Bridie learns, the more unusual this puzzle becomes. She prowls around dirty Victorian London trying to piece this together, accompanied by a motley crew, including a faithful ghost companion, a tall giantess housemaid, and a friendly police inspector.

This story is definitely... unusual. I found the mystery itself to be the most compelling part of it. When I'm in those parts of the book, I'm totally riveted, gobbling through it, wondering what's going and what I'll learn next. The fantasy element existing within the real world made this a most surprising and interesting mix. Bridie's friends are also a sweet and funny bunch, offering her physical and emotional support in ways that only loyal friends do.

But I almost gave up on this story multiple times, especially at the beginning. I found the writing style to be extremely difficult to understand, to the point where I had no idea what was going on in the first 50 pages. The excessive descriptions just don't do it for me. Every time a person is introduced, we read extensively about every feature on their face, every article of clothing, their posture and body shape, all using florid metaphors that don't make any sense to me. Each time this happens, I would lose my train of thought halfway through or forget the point the author is trying to make. Then I'd have to go back and reread it multiple times before I can even make heads or tails of it.

It's so frustrating when a good story is mired in this overwrought style of writing. I also found the sentences to be weird in construction and the vocabulary obscure. So I was often looking up multiple words in every sentence. Once I got about 100 pages in and the plot started taking shape, I went back and reread the first 50 pages, at last understanding what was happening. But a good story shouldn't be that way. The writing should keep the reader engaged in the story, not take them out of it in confusion every few sentences or attempt to impress them with verbal gymnastics.

This is also an extremely gory book, with plenty of bodily fluids, internal organs, pus, festering, blood, poo... you name it, it's in this book. While it didn't bother me for the most part, I do like to indulge in reading while eating, and this is definitely not good for that.

In the end, this was both an interesting but also extremely frustrating reading experience for me. I don't want to discount or sell this story short. No doubt, without the verbal gymnastics and the florid descriptions, this would have been easily a 4-star read for me. But as it stands, it's a story I like, but with lots of reservations. I can't give this more than 3 stars, especially as I'm not sure I understood half of it even though I read most of it multiple times. ...more