

Best Contemporary Mysteries

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What is it about mysteries that keep readers coming back year after year? Perhaps it is the opportunity to attempt to outwit the sleuth and solve the case before they can? Or maybe it is the relentless pace of a great mystery novel that makes them impossible to put down? Or could it be the thrill of imagining being in the midst of dangerous and critical situations from the comfort of one's armchair next to a crackling fire and a nice warm drink?

Whatever the reason or reasons are, readers have been captivated by mysteries since the publication in 1841 of what is widely regarded as the first modern mystery novel, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" by Edgar Allen Poe. A bevy of some of the most memorable characters in literary history followed in the wake of Poe's creative breakthrough, from Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes to Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot to Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone, among so many others.

Beyond these immortal authors and the characters they created lies a wealth of incredible contemporary mysteries written by some of the best authors writing fiction today. Below is a small sampling of some of the great contemporary mysteries you can find at the library that our patrons have loved.

One of the best examples of the vibrancy of the modern mystery novel can be found in Australian author Jane Harper's 2017 debut, "The Dry." The wonderfully atmospheric and vividly described setting of a small town in Australia going through its worst drought in years provides the backdrop for the mystery. When Australian federal agent Aaron Falk returns home to attend the funeral of his childhood best friend, Luke, who provided the alibi that exonerated Falk 20 years prior in a murder investigation, it triggers mysteries in both the present and 20 years in the past. Readers found this taut and tense page turner irresistible.

Some of the most beloved mysteries over the years have been set in claustrophobic settings, which serve to only heighten the tension of the narrative. Ruth Ware's 2017 cruise ship set mystery "The Woman in Cabin 10." Lo Blacklock is a travel writer who has been given what appears to be a plum assignment: a week aboard a luxury cruise ship with a very small number of cabins. When Blacklock witnesses the horrifying sight of a passenger being thrown overboard, she immediately tells the other passengers – only to discover that all passengers are still accounted for. Blacklock's steadfast belief that something has gone terribly wrong in spite of all the evidence to the contrary leads to an incredibly tense story with many twists and turns that has been compared to the best work of Agatha Christie. We also recently participated in a virtual author event with Ruth Ware, which you can view on our virtual author events webpage along with many other archived author events from the past here:

<https://libraryc.org/wyckofflibrary>

AJ Finn's widely acclaimed 2019 mystery novel "The Woman in the Window" evokes an atmosphere reminiscent of film noir at its finest. Anna Fox is a shut-in living in New York City, where she spends her days in a soft haze of watching old films and drinking wine. A new family moves in across the street and appears to be the idyllic portrait of family life. But after Anna sees something she was not meant to see looking out of her window one night, her world is changed forever. Full of surprising plot developments that will keep you guessing, "The Woman in the Window" was popular enough to be adapted to the screen in a Netflix original film in 2021.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that beyond our wonderful collection of contemporary mystery novels, our library also has an extensive collection of contemporary British mystery TV series on DVD and Blu-Ray, which have proved to be immensely popular with our library patrons. "Midsomer Murders" is one such series. Set in the isolated English village of Midsomer in the present day, the series follows the efforts of Detective Chief Inspectors Tom and John Barnaby to solve murders that happen in the beautiful but dangerous countryside. This series has run for 23 seasons to date and shows no signs of slowing down!

A grittier British mystery series waiting to be binge watched can be found in the form of "Bloodlands", a plot-driven thriller set in Northern Ireland. Experienced detective Tom Brannick is faced with investigating a series of disappearances spanning 20 years, including that of his wife. The investigation points towards a notorious assassin known only as "Goliath."

These books and DVDs are just a small sampling of the amazing collection of contemporary mysteries we have in our collection. Stop by the library and pick one up, and lose yourself in the pleasure of a modern whodunit well done!