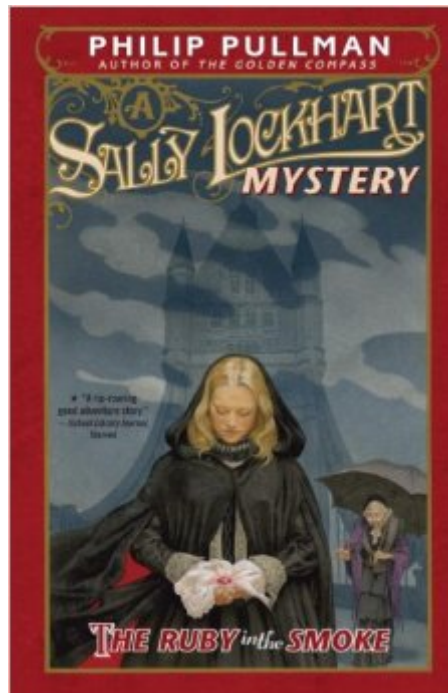


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The Ruby In The Smoke: A Sally Lockhart Mystery



Synopsis

“BEWARE THE SEVEN blessings . . .” When she first utters these words, 16-year-old Sally Lockhart doesn’t know their meaning. But when an employee of her late father hears them, he dies of fear. Thus begins Sally’s terrifying journey into the seamy underworld of Victorian London, in search of clues to her father’s mysterious death.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 750 (What’s this?)

Series: Sally Lockhart

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Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.6 x 8.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars See all reviews (187 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #385,277 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #183 in Books > Teens > Mysteries & Thrillers > Historical #280 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Europe #498 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Action & Adventure > Mystery & Thriller

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

It’s been nearly ten years since I first read this book... I’m 22 now, and it remains one of my favorites. Pullman tells the story of a desperate teenage girl’s search for the truth about her father’s death without pulling any punches or talking down to his audience (which is probably between the ages of twelve and fifteen or so); there are allusions to sex and violence, but they are not explicitly descriptive. The novel’s mystery is intricate and pervasive, but almost as important to its texture is the look we are given at how several lonely and unhappy people become a family for each other, even in the face of danger and loss. Sally Lockhart is a wonderful protofeminist heroine, whose bravery, intelligence, and independence should inspire most readers; the secondary characters, such as Fred and Jim, are charming and more than up to the challenge of being Sally’s associates. The conclusion is stunning, and readers who enjoy this novel will want to read the other books

about Sally and her friends (Shadow in the North is particularly heartrending). I find the Sally books generally more emotionally-involving than *His Dark Materials*, but the high quality of the writing remains constant. I still make a point of picking up Pullman's newest books when they come out, and *The Ruby in the Smoke* is the book that started it all.

After being blown away by "His Dark Materials," I went questing for more books by Philip Pullman. I found Sally Lockhart. "Ruby in the Smoke" is a very different style of book. There is no fantasy in this series, no armored bears or magical implements. This is straight historical mystery, set in England of 1872. Sally Lockhart is our young hero. She is an amazingly well-rounded character, at times a plucky, spirited lass, at times a shy young woman. She is looking for facts about the death of her Father. Someone else is looking for her, and her connection to the lost Ruby of Agrapar. While this book does not have the sense of wonder and captivation of "His Dark Materials," it does possess its own strengths. Pullman has gone very deep into accuracy and social relevance with this trilogy. The story is as much Sally Lockhart's battle with women's conventions of the time, as it is with the villains of the series. The story is very dark, and the opium trade and the Indian Mutiny are all major story points. (In fact, anyone taking up "Ruby in the Smoke" would do well to review this historical events.) A very good, intelligent book. I am looking forward to reading the rest of the series.

This trilogy is the story of Sally Lockhart, a young woman who overcomes obstacles and enemies to build a life in Victorian England, where young ladies should be seen and not heard. In this book, she discovers the true story of who her father is, and how her mother died. She will also hunt for a fabulous ruby, and travel through the lower depths of the East End of London. I think that this is the best of this trilogy, although the last book is very good. The mystery is very compelling, and Pullman is brilliant at drawing you into the world of Victorian England. This will have you on the edge of your seat! Sally Lockhart is an attractive character, and takes everything that is thrown at her by Pullman in good heart. I definitely wanted to read the whole series after this one. I came to this story after *The Golden Compass* and *The Subtle Knife*. I think that *His Dark Materials* is much richer and deeper than this series, but maybe the Sally Lockhart books are easier for a younger audience to read. They are set in a more familiar world, and the stories do not interwind. At the same time, Philip Pullman is a cut above most children's storytellers, as his characters and stories are more original and modern - Sally is definitely a feminist heroine. Will definitely keep this one for my daughter to read.

I admit I am biased! Philip Pullman writes books that are readable, entertaining, educational and, sometimes, controversial. This one fits easily into the first three categories. In later books (his Dark Materials Trilogy) Pullman becomes more controversial and has opened himself up to criticism from various religious extremists who see his novels as an attack on their own personal beliefs. The Ruby in The Smoke is NOT controversial (though doubtless some fundamentalists who have found fault with his later books will now be trolling through his earlier writing to try and find a politically-incorrect sentence they don't agree with and give it the big thumbs down). The heroine is 16 year-old Sally Lockhart and she lives in Victorian London. Her father has been murdered and her life is about to be turned upside down by a legacy she doesn't want. Pullman does an excellent job of describing Victorian London (the educational concept). He also makes an exceptional job of plotting and holding the reader's attention (the entertainment). In terms of writing, his style is clear, often amusing, and he has the ability to draw settings in just a few brief words (the readability). Pullman's London is full of rogues and scoundrels and vagabonds and neer-do-wells. And it seems they're all on the side of the opium dealers (who really DID exist in Victorian London). But Sally Lockhart draws loyalty from some borderline characters of her own. People who are street-wise, and know how to help her through her problems. If you've not yet read a Philip Pullman book, start with this one and see how you get on. They're a lot of fun and they're extraordinarily well written.

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