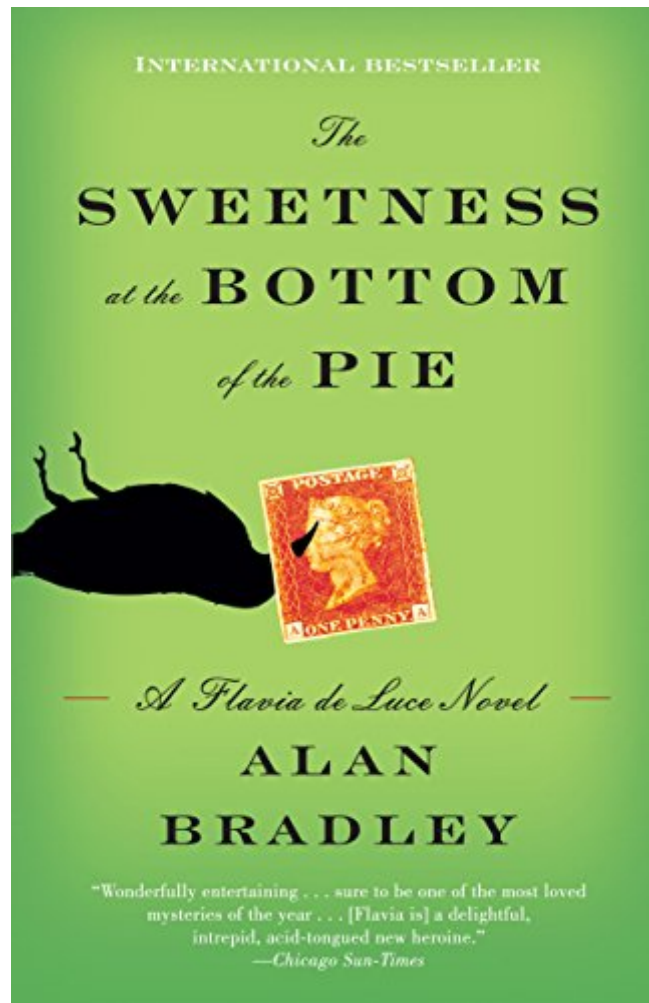


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The Sweetness At The Bottom Of The Pie: A Flavia De Luce Novel



Synopsis

BONUS: This edition contains a *The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie* discussion guide and an excerpt from Alan Bradley's *The Weed That Strings the Hangman's Bag*. It is the summer of 1950 "and at the once-grand mansion of Buckshaw, young Flavia de Luce, an aspiring chemist with a passion for poison, is intrigued by a series of inexplicable events: A dead bird is found on the doorstep, a postage stamp bizarrely pinned to its beak. Then, hours later, Flavia finds a man lying in the cucumber patch and watches him as he takes his dying breath. For Flavia, who is both appalled and delighted, life begins in earnest when murder comes to Buckshaw. "I wish I could say I was afraid, but I wasn't. Quite the contrary. This was by far the most interesting thing that had ever happened to me in my entire life."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"*The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie*" is a simple mystery, written without explicit violence, sexual situations, or terrorists. The book is filled with humor that is delightful, very tongue-in-cheek and very British. The mystery is solved; its solution is arrived at through intelligent thinking and resourcefulness. The characters are interesting and develop distinct personalities through the

course of the story. Flavia de Luce, heroine of "The Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie" is an intrepid young lady with a penchant for poisons. Arsenic and its antidotes are her special interests. A brilliant, budding chemist, she is also an all-around persistent protagonist who insists on inserting herself into every situation! Flavia's family consists of her reclusive, eccentric father and two older sisters, Ophelia and Daphne. Her mother, Harriet, was an adventurer who died tragically during a mountain climbing expedition. Of the three sisters, Flavia believes herself to be most like her mother. The core family is completed by Mrs. Mullet, the cook/housekeeper, and Dogger, a former soldier who served with Mr. deLuce. Having served in a number of positions during his employment with the de Luces, Dogger is now the gardener. He is also Flavia's confidante and mentors her in useful skills such as lockpicking. Intelligent preteens will find in Flavia someone with whom they can identify. Individuals seeking an entertaining read which does not require intense concentration will sail through this novel. As this is the first in a series, I will be interested to see how the characters develop and whether Bradley can resist succumbing to the formula mystery genre to which so many authors fall prey.

Yes, this is a book written for grown ups and yes, the main character is 11 years old. Flavia de Luce has a passion for poison, the vocabulary of an adult, and a bicycle named Gladys. Her mother died climbing mountains in the Himalayas and her father, Colonel de Luce, is just about as distant, showing more interest in his stamp collection than his daughters. It's part of the whole English reluctance to show affection and keeping a stiff upper lip, or something like that... But things get shaken up a bit when a dead blackbird shows up on the porch at Buckshaw (the old mansion where the de Luces live) with a penny stamp stuck to its beak. The next morning Flavia finds a dead man in the cucumber patch - well, he's not dead yet, but expires with a final word: "Vale." But who was he, and more important, who killed him? Was it the Colonel who had secretly argued with the stranger the night before, or Dogger, the dependable but unstable gardener (who still suffers from his experiences in Japanese POW camps)? Maybe he died from eating a slice of Mrs. Mullet's horrible cream pie? Whoever it was, Flavia is determined to find out with the help of her chemistry knowledge and Gladys. In spite of a slow start, this was really an enjoyable read. It has a style that reminded me of Alan Bennett's "The Uncommon Reader." It's what the English like to call "wickedly funny," which apparently means that it's funny in a clever and witty way with a good helping of subtle sarcasm. And it's certainly all of those.

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