



The Shakespeare Manuscript

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Not one of Shakespeare's plays exists in manuscript form until a failing bookseller discovers a long-lost, early version of HAMLET. In an attempt to trace the puzzling manuscript's origins, its new owner finds he can't trust the identity of play's author and soon has doubts about his own. But by then, the race to stage the new HAMLET is on, taking a toll on everyone involved. In the end, the new play leaves audience and actors alike wondering about the unexpected and moving consequences of the play they've just experienced.

The Shakespeare Manuscript Details

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Author : Stewart Buettner

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From Reader Review The Shakespeare Manuscript for online ebook

Beth Burr says

My rating can be summed up in 4 words- could have been better. There were so many characters and they were each quite complicated so they could have been developed better. But there were story lines that were just forgotten by the end. Joanna is getting divorced, I guess that's the end of that story. She has some sort of relationship with her brother-in-law; what kind of relationship, we'll never know. Then at the end there's a short paragraph where the manuscript is determined authentic! That's amazing!...But it won't be explored beyond that. Was this meant to be a series?

Jo says

My expectations were higher than the actual story.

Sue says

DNF - Life is too short to keep reading books that aren't holding your interest (and are pushing an agenda).

Dana says

I stopped halfway through and deleted this from my Kindle. I probably should have done it a lot sooner.

Although the title and summary make you think this will be a thriller about a lost Shakespeare manuscript, I'm fairly sure the author just wanted to attract attention to the book by making it seem like it's another *The Da Vinci Code* or *Rule of Four*. It's not even close. It's a plodding book about an agoraphobic woman who was once an actress but now lives and works in a bookstore. The bookstore gets hold of a manuscript that purports to be a lost version of *Hamlet*. She gives it to a local theater troupe to perform in the hopes it will revive their reputation. She overcomes her phobia to appear in the play. (At least I think that is what will happen, I stopped at the point where she slept with the director and was introduced to the rest of the troupe as the new Ophelia.)

Now I've read other books where the actual story is nothing like what's described in the summary (see my review of *The Scars*), but at least the actual story was interesting enough to keep me reading once I got over the bait and switch. This book made me irritated by the ploy. The so-called plot isn't interesting, and the writing is dull. It was a free download on Kindle when I got it, and it's a waste of the kilobytes. Spare yourself from this one.

Sharon says

3.5/5 stars

I listed this as historical fiction since the tale takes place in the early 1990s.

April Oliphant is the agoraphobic daughter of an antiquarian book dealer ... who sends home a box of documents he's purchased in England. Miles, her father, has been conked on the head and robbed before he gets home, so April is on her own to figure out the provenance of what may or may not be an early Shakespeare play. She shows it to her former acting coach ... who promptly takes it and prepares to present the play.

There are some minor moments of suspense, but overall the book just felt a little lacking. Things happen suddenly and then are explained in hindsight, which just did not work as a device for me. Some controversies are never resolved, and some are resolved too tidily.

There were also some minor editorial errors that irritated, such as spelling a character's name two different ways and describing a blouse as "stripped" where "striped" was clearly intended.

An okay read, but not brilliant.

Sue says

I can't believe so many people loved this book. This is drivel! The lead character is a whiny brat, and she is surrounded by self important whiners. The lack of care of this manuscript is appalling. The entire thing is completely unbelievable and total waste of time. Hopefully everyone out there who already has it got the free Kindle edition, because that's what it's worth.

The only reason it's two stars rather than one is it does seem to have had the benefit of some copy editing. I value correct spelling and that's all this has going for it.

Conrad Wesselhoeft says

Stewart Buettner has served up a literary feast that satisfies in every way--from richly wrought characters to twisting plot to sharp, sexy dialogue. Plus, he sprinkles the bon mots like a master.

The story's driving question hooks you fast: Is the Shakespeare Manuscript real or fake? At various points, I felt sure I knew the answer, only to be surprised. As with all great story telling, the resolution feels both unexpected and inevitable.

Set in the present day, The Shakespeare Manuscript reflects Buettner's love of history, research and theater--Shakespeare in particular. A production of Othello evolves into Hamlet--or rather, a mysteriously unearthed early draft of the play we all know. The familiar Shakespeare characters overlap and merge with Buettner's. For example, Iago's counterpart is sniveling, brilliant Charles Cassidy; Ophelia's is lovely, agoraphobic April Oliphant. In sync with Shakespeare, Buettner's characters are fascinating blends of bright and dark, beautifully flawed. No one escapes taint. All are desperately seeking missing pieces of themselves.

The Shakespeare Manuscript is storytelling at its finest--complex yet seamless, earthy yet transcendent. Somewhere the bard is smiling, and the glint in his eye says "Well done!"

Robert Walsh says

The book was good but at times seemed a bit unorganized and disjointed. The story line jumped around as if the author decided to shift gears mid stream. Some of the subplots remain unresolved at the end. However, the story was entertaining, and I was able to connect with several of the characters as they dealt with the various issues in their lives.

Becky Wooler says

I expected it to be more about an actual Shakespeare play. But it was really more about all this drama surrounding a theater company and the daughter of a used bookseller. And I didn't find any of the characters particularly likable, which makes it hard for me to get into a story. So, since I'm reading on borrowed time and won't have nearly as much once I'm not spending so much time feeding a baby, I'd rather cut my losses and move on. Stopped at around 30% of the way through, according to my Kindle.

Laura says

I liked parts of the main story line of this book and found it enjoyable to read....however, there were a lot of things going on that didn't really hang with the storyline or were just kind of happened and then dropped. I think the author did well with some of the character development and kept the story moving -- despite a lot of subplot activity that was kind of distracting. I think with more writing and refinement the author could produce a very good book.

Trish Bodine says

This is an amazing book. I just happened to be reading Macbeth in the classroom, and this book was my guilty pleasure book. I liked it a lot! The plot is well thought out and fits with many of the articles that I have read dealing with the authenticity of Shakespeare being Shakespeare. The characters are believable and likeable.

One criticism: There are a few typos in the Kindle version of the novel. It is not anything that is detrimental to the story, but it can be irritating to see an I just in the middle of a sentence, here and there.

Mary says

This was a free Kindle book and it didn't take long before I realized why it was on the free shelf. While the premise behind the story sounded interesting, the whole book just fell flat on its face. The characters were

flat as was the plot and the feeble attempts at mysterious things (like what happened to the main character's brother) meant to capture the reader's interest. I didn't continue reading the book because I wanted to find out what happened. The only reason I actually finished it was because I hate to leave anything undone.

Kristin says

I finished it, but not because I wanted to. This is our September book club selection, primarily because one of the girls knows the author. Which will make it hard when I rail against the awful writing, convoluted plot, and poorly-developed characters. You don't make someone a main character and write from his point of view only to kill him off halfway through! What the hell? Somebody could have used an editor. Or a shredder.

Rachel says

Free kindle download --at least when I got it.

The story was interesting, I felt that it bogged down a little when quoting from the "Shakespeare manuscript" but those passages weren't overly long (skim-able).

I think the most interesting thing about the book was the way it handled its agoraphobic protagonist. I don't know if it was accurate, but it was interesting.

The book switched point of view between three people/ narrators.

Overall the book was an okay read. Not annoying, not life changing.

Mary Smith says

If I could give this book less than 1 star, I would. I'm glad it was a free book from Amazon so I didn't waste any money on it. There was potential for an interesting story involving a newly-discovered manuscript by Shakespeare, but it's so full of impossibilities that make no sense at all.

The manuscript is discovered by a dealer in rare books, who sends it back to his daughter in the USA. Does she put it in the safe until her father returns from England as you would expect? No, she gives it to a professor of English literature who is directing a play for a very small group of actors.

I can't say any more about it because I gave up at this point. There are so many books worth reading that I couldn't waste any more time on it.
