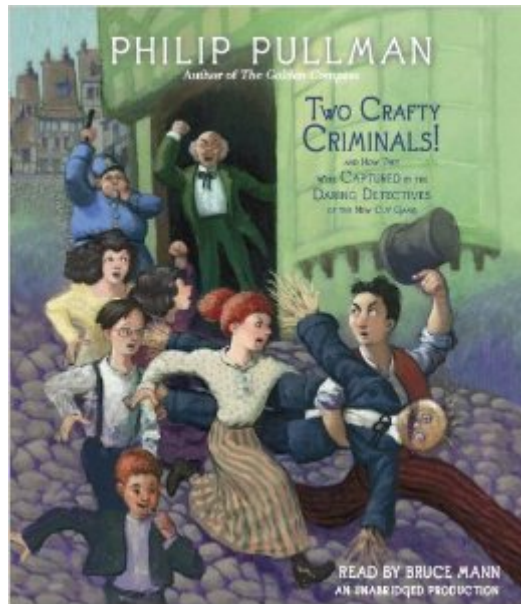


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Two Crafty Criminals!: And How They Were Captured By The Daring Detectives Of The New Cut Gang



Synopsis

Benny Kaminsky and Thunderbolt Dobney lead a rag-tag gang of neighborhood rowdies. Their territory is the New Cut on London's South Bank—a place bristling with swindlers, bookies, pickpockets, and the occasional policeman. And their aim is to solve crimes. When counterfeit coins start showing up in their neighborhood, Thunderbolt fears his own father may be behind the crime. But his friends devise a way to trap the real culprit. Then the gang takes on the case of some stolen silver. They have just two clues—a blob of wax, and an unusually long match. But even this slippery thief is unmasked by the determined kids of the New Cut. Filled with silly sleuthing, improbable disguises, crazy ruses, and merry mayhem, these stories are action-packed romps from one of the best storytellers ever—Philip Pullman. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

Audio CD

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Authors, A-Z > (P) > Pullman, Philip #2331 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction >

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Two Crafty Criminals by Phillip Pullman is a collection of two stories, featuring a group of young detectives called the New Cut Gang, that were previously published individually in '96 and '98. The stories really are separate from each other and even feature different gang members. The first story, Thunderbolt's Waxwork, follows Sam/Thunderbolt as he tries to figure out who is making the fake currency that has been showing up all over town. His father is suspected, and even Thunderbolt is not entirely sure of his Dad's innocence. Thankfully he has his friends in the New Cut Gang to help him get to the bottom of this mystery. The second story, The Gas fitters ball, features the

mischievous twins Angela and Zerlina. Their friends (older) are in love, but having a hard time becoming engaged. To make matters worse, someone has stolen the silver from the Gas Fitters dance hall! I liked the stories, and thought the mysteries were fun and entertaining. I laughed out loud a few times and got into the plot line. This is one of those instances, where I could tell you about the characters, like Sharky who eats everything, Thunderbolt, and how he is brainy but clumsy, or over-imaginative Benny who solves crimes but also gets carried away and it would sound like a hoot. The trouble I had with this book is, it sort of fell flat in the character department. I mean, we are quickly told who these kids are, but then we never really see it. It mentions more than once that Thunderbolt is excluded out of certain tasks because he is clumsy, but I never once saw him trip or mess up. Sharky was one of my favorite characters and he and Bridie are only mentioned in passing in the second story. I had a hard time remembering who the characters were and felt like I picked this book up mid-series.

As a mother who screens - or tries to anymore - everything her 13-year-old daughter reads, it's been a while since I read anything by Philip Pullman. Of course, we all know "His Dark Materials" trilogy and "Sally Lockhart" series - but I also enjoyed, when said daughter was much younger, "The Firework Maker's Daughter." I think it's a testament to the genius of the writer, no matter his politics or religious views, that he is able to amass such a varied body of work. "Two Crafty Criminals" is a bind-up re-print of the adventures of the New Cut Gang, first featured in "Thunderbolt's Waxwork" (1994) and "The Gasfitter's Ball" (1995). This is a perfect middle-school introduction to the currently popular steampunk genre. I loved reading about the escapades of these incorrigible kids! The language and tone of the book was perfect, perfect, perfect for the era, and the voice of the characters totally age-appropriate. The best thing about the book? My daughter actually laughed out loud while she was reading it - as did I! Said daughter's review follows: "Two Crafty Criminals! And How They Were Captured by the Daring Detectives of the New Cut Gang' by Philip Pullman was a funny novel about how sometimes kids really *are* the best detectives ..." Benny - the leader and genius of the New Cut Gang "Thunderbolt - his right hand man. Bit clumsy but has a good heart." Bridie - with typical Irish red hair and red temper, she helps out with the action parts "Benny - (Irish) Bridie's little brother. Will eat *anything* from wax to cork to humbugs." Angela and Zerlina - Italian twins that look like angels and act like devils. "These are the members of the New Cut Gang.

I truly loved the books of Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials Trilogy -- Golden Compass, The Subtle Knife and The Amber Spyglass -- despite a streak of darkness in that magical children's series, but I

was totally put off by Pullman's contrarian cruelty in the second of the Sally Lockhart mysteries, *The Shadow of the North*, which I quit reading even though I was nearly to the end. Despite that, *Two Crafty Criminals!*: and how they were Captured by the Daring Detectives of the New Cut Gang looked so cheery and so unlike Pullman's *The Ruby in the Smoke: A Sally Lockhart Mystery* and *The Shadow in the North: A Sally Lockhart Mystery* that I decided to take another chance on him.

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