



The Stonehenge Letters

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While researching why Freud failed to win a Nobel Prize at the Nobel Archives in Sweden, a psychiatrist makes an unusual discovery. Among the piles of papers in the 'Crackpot' file are letters addressed to the executor of Alfred Nobel's will, written by several notable Nobel laureates — including Rudyard Kipling and Marie Curie — each offering an explanation of why and how Stonehenge was constructed. Diligent research uncovers that Alfred Nobel added a secret codicil to his will, a prize for the Nobel laureate who solves the mystery of Stonehenge.

Weaving together a wealth of primary sources — photos, letters, wills — *The Stonehenge Letters* tells the tale of a fascinating secret competition.

'This little novel is a delight from its first word to its last. *The Stonehenge Letters* is by turns thoughtful, whimsical, haunting and laugh-out-loud funny. Reading this book was like skating over the smoothest ice; I was blissfully unaware of the transition from history to fiction and back again'

— Annabel Lyon, author of *The Sweet Girl*

'In his alarmingly smart and dangerously absorbing Freud-tinged romance/detective story, Harry Karlinsky deploys explosions, earthworms, radioactive particles and a passel of Nobel laureates to reinvent history in the golden age of invention.'

— Zsuzsi Gartner, author of *Better Living Through Plastic Explosives*

The Stonehenge Letters Details

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From Reader Review The Stonehenge Letters for online ebook

Nick The Lemming says

Interesting book, centred on the apparent semi-official Nobel prize for investigation into Stonehenge, the purported theories concerning the edifice by Nobel winners, and the deliberations amongst the judges. Partly biographical, partly academic discussion of Stonehenge, it's an interesting work, though it seems in places that the author wanted to write about Freud more than the actual subject, given the lengthy passages about the psychologist throughout the book.

Lisa Bentley says

Have you ever wondered how Stonehenge happened to become Stonehenge? This mystical circle of stones has fascinated people for as long as it records began. It is this mystery that is the forefront of Harry Karlinsky's book The Stonehenge Letters.

The story is told from through various correspondences all linking back to Alfred Nobel, the founder of the Nobel prizes. And what sometimes reads as a factual text is in fact a fictional interpretation of events.

Firstly, let me say I really enjoyed this book. I was fascinated by the facts that were included and intrigued by the question of Stonehenge's existence and indeed the thought processes of the people who tried to pose possible answers to this mystery – the likes of Madame Curie and Rudyard Kipling among others. However, I did become completely discombobulated by the mixture of fact and fiction. The Stonehenge Letters reads like fact but it is fiction. You have to adjust your way of reading and accepting the information given.

Furthermore, the tenuous link to Freud seemed misplaced. Initially it is given as a bit of back story into the research of Nobel prize nominees but it goes no further than that and could have probably been omitted without consequence to the rest of the story.

If you take this book as it is, a fictional account of a historical figure then you will find the facts and information entertaining. However, I personally feel more could have been made of this book had it been presented more like a fictional text.

Ashen says

Stonehenge in the title caught me, and letters always fascinate. In this psychological dig Karlinsky's narrator (a retired psychiatrist and amateur historian) wants to know why Sigmund Freud, his hero, had never been awarded the Nobel Prize. Undeterred by a wall of secrecy, he finds unofficial channels and discovers a 'Crackpot file' that reveals countless conceited self-nominations, and, the story goes, a confidential extra prize Nobel awarded to any laureate who could solve the mystery of Stonehenge.

All I knew of Alfred Nobel (1833 -1896) was he invented & patented dynamite and made a fortune, which he largely donated towards a prize fund for scientists and artists who had bestowed the greatest benefit to mankind in any previous year.

Certain events in Nobel's life must have influenced this generosity, like the shocking discovery when after his brother Ludvig's death in 1888 several newspapers published obituaries of Alfred in error. A French obituary stated 'Le marchand de la mort est mort' (The merchant of death is dead). Source: Britannia.com

In 'The Stonehenge Letters,' known details are embellished or invented, which tasks readers like me to sift fact from fiction, only to be impressed by the wonderful ironies and the subtleties Karlinsky used in the weaving of this story. There is even a Freudian psychological autopsy of everyone involved.

Nobel's love for Percy Bysshe Shelley's poetry makes his acquaintance with Lady Antrobus quite feasible. And I'm certain 'A Sentimental and Practical Guide to Amesbury and Stonehenge' (brilliant title) by Lady Florence Antrobus (1900) has served the author well. I managed to unearth the text. You'll probably value it better if you find it yourself.

So was the mystery of Stonehenge solved? The attempts were certainly riveting. Suffice to say the proposals by Rudyard Kipling, Ivan Pavlov, Teddy Roosevelt and Marie Curie, each coloured by their individual obsessions and disciplines, did not sufficiently convince the panel to designate the funds, they went to a non-laureate Alfred would have approved of. Only Marie Curie's idea came close enough for the panel to draw on the confidential opinion of Albert Einstein, who granted that Curie's speculations could one day be confirmed, and offers a humorous postscript.

I enjoyed the gripping mystery tour, making notes along the way for Google searches. Were a similar imaginative weaving of fact and fiction applied to education, the when, how and why of our past could turn into a memorable quest for students and convey a deeper appreciation of history's complexities.

Tuck says

the nobel committee keeps a "crackpot file" for various correspondence like self-nominations for prizes, various hypothesis (sp?) in science and such, where to stick the tnt.... and the little known prize for who could "explain" stonehenge...

you'll just have to read this entertaining and fast and thoughtful novel to see what sigmund freud has to do with stonehenge. cigars?

Sarah Miller says

The story - or, the collection - begins with a psychiatrist who is devoted to Freud. Disturbed by the fact that Freud was never awarded the Nobel prize, the psychiatrist launches an investigation into the newly released files. The remainder of the book reads like files, too. In a series of letters, notes, photographs, etc. readers discover a secret Nobel prize - and its history. In addition to learning about Alfred Nobel and the history of his time, we are also treated to some fiction, too. Not being very familiar with the prize, much of its origins was new to me. I really had a hard time distinguishing fact from fiction.

Normally, this would feel.... Engaging. Reading through a text like this usually feels exciting - like snooping. Ultimately, though, I couldn't find the "story" in this book. I personally would've benefited from some narrative cohesion - between chapters or sections, I would have liked to know the narrators thoughts. This

may just be me, and who I am as a reader. It is a good book, but I never became invested in the outcome. For example, I finished reading yesterday, and I can't remember if someone was awarded the prize. I know some came close... Anyway, my favorite parts came at the end. I found myself laughing at the psychoanalysis. It was very entertaining.

This is a book I'd recommend to those who often read informational texts.

George K. says

Το βιβλίο έχει μια σχετική μτρία βαθμολογία στο Goodreads, χωρίς μάλιστα και πέρα πολλές αξιολογήσεις (μχρι στιγμς είναι κτι παραπνω απ εκατ? λες κι λες). Αυτ? μως δεν με απ?ρεψε απ? το να το αγοράσω με το που κυκλοφ?ρησε στα βιβλιοπωλε?α και να το διαβ?σω ?μεσα. Γιατ?; Επειδ? μου φ?νηκε πολ? ενδιαφ?ρον το ?λο πρ?τζεκτ και γιατ? μου κ?νησε την προσοχ? ο συνδυασμ?ς non fiction και φαντασ?ας. Χ?ρια ?τι ε?χα καιρ? να διαβ?σω κ?τι σχετικ? με το Στ?ουνχεντς και τα μυστ?ρια που το περιβ?λλουν. Ε, λοιπ?ν, π?ρασα πολ? ωρα?α και ευχ?ριστα την ?ρα μου διαβ?ζοντας το βιβλ?ο.

Η περ?ληψη στο οπισθ?φυλλο της ελληνικ?ς ?κδοσης λ?ει τα εξ?ς: "νας ψυχ?ατρος που ερευν? τα Αρχε?α Ν?μπελ στη Στοκχ?λμη, γυρε?οντας τους λ?γους για τους οπο?ους ο Φρ?ντ δεν τιμ?θηκε ποτ? με το περ?φημο Βραβε?ο, κ?νει μια απρ?σμενη ανακ?λυψη. Αν?μεσα στις στο?βες των απορριφ?ντων εγγρ?φων που ξεχειλ?ζουν τον "Τρελοφ?κελο", ?πως αν?καθεν τον αποκαλο?ν στο ?δρυμα, εντοπ?ζει μια σειρ? επιστολ?ν προς τον εκτελεστ? της διαθ?κης του ?λφρεντ Ν?μπελ που υπογρ?φονται απ? δι?σημους κατ?χους του Βραβε?ου - αν?μεσ? τους ο Κ?πλινγκ, η Μαρ? Κιουρ?, ο Α?νστ?ιν, ο Παβλ?φ. ?λες καταγ?νονται με το π?τε και π?ς κατασκευ?στηκε το μεγαλιθικ? σ?νολο του Στ?ουνχεντς, αποκαλ?πτοντας ?τι ο ?λφρεντ Ν?μπελ ε?χε προσθ?σει ?να μυστικ? κωδ?κελλο στη διαθ?κη του, με τον οπο?ο θ?σπιζε ?να βραβε?ο για τον νομπελ?στα που θα ?λυνε το μυστ?ριο του Στ?ουνχεντς."

Διαβ?ζοντας κανε?ς το βιβλ?ο αυτ? θα μ?θει αρκετ? πρ?γματα για τον ?λφρεντ Ν?μπελ και τα Βραβε?α που εμπνε?στηκε, ?πως επ?σης πλ?θος απ? αν?κδοτα της ιστορ?ας της επιστ?μης των Αρχ?ν του 20ου αι?να, καθ?ς και ενδιαφ?ροντα στοιχε?α για το Στ?ουνχεντς. Δι?φορα αληθιν? γεγον?τα και ντοκουμ?ντα πλ?κονται με την φαντασ?α του συγγραφ?α και το χιο?μορ, με το αποτ?λεσμα να είναι ?κρως ψυχαγωγικ? και απολαυστικ?. Εντ?ξει, μην περιμ?νετε τ?ποτα τρομερ?ς αποκαλ?ψεις ? αγων?α για την επ?λυση του μυστηρ?ου του Στ?ουνχεντς, ?μως δεν ?χει σημασ?α π?ντα ο προορισμ?ς, αλλ? το ?διο το ταξ?δι. Και το ταξ?δι στο συγκεκριμ?νο βιβλ?ο είναι πολ? ωρα?ο. Η γραφ? είναι πολ? καλ?, ευχ?ριστη και ευκολοδι?βαστη, το ?λο στιλ αφ?γησης και παρουσ?ασης της ιστορ?ας απ?θανο, δεν θυμ?ζει σε τ?ποτα μυθιστ?ρημα ? κ?τι της φαντασ?ας του συγγραφ?ας. Στο βιβλ?ο υπ?ρχουν πλ?θος φωτογραφι?ν και σχεδιαγραμμ?των, που αν το ξεφυλλ?σει κανε?ς θα αναρωτι?ται αν είναι μυθιστ?ρημα ? βιβλ?ο ιστορ?ας. Ε, είναι και τα δυο!

Υ.Γ. Η ?κδοση της Αλεξ?νδρειας πολ? καλ?, με προσεγμ?νη μετ?φραση και παρουσ?αση του κειμ?νου, καθ?ς και με πολ? ωρα?ο εξ?φυλλο.

Kimberly says

The first thing that drew me to this book, by Harry Karlinsky, was the title. I love all things about Stonehenge. So, of course I had to get the book.

As I began to read this book I was ready to sit down to a nice fictional book. Instead, soon after beginning to read, I caught myself wondering if I was wrong. This book centers around a secret prize which Alfred Nobel originated looking for secrets of Stonehenge. Only winners of the Nobel Prize were allowed to submit and the submission period was 10 years.

The people who were asked to submit were action people in history, which helped to make me wonder whether I was reading fiction or nonfiction.

I was so drawn by this book, on so many levels, that it was difficult to put down, once I began. I highly recommend this book to anyone that enjoys history. Or well-written works of fiction.

I was given this book by NetGalley and HarperCollins UK in exchange for my honest review.

Sarah-Hope says

The Stonehenge Letters is a remarkable creature: sort of a hybrid history/science mockumentary. I have never come across another book like it. I've read short pieces of science satire or humor, but Karlinsky sets up his joke and maintains it through two hundred and fifty-six engaging pages.

The premise behind the book is this: After establishing the Nobel prizes, shortly before his death Nobel funded a one-time prize for the "solving of the Stonehenge mystery." The competitors for this prize were limited to the first decade of Nobel prize winners, a group that included the likes of Marie Curie, Rudyard Kipling, and Ivan Pavlov.

The book is written as carefully produced non-fiction and includes a variety of forms. There's a narrative of the discovery of this competition by a psychiatrist searching the Nobel archives in an attempt to understand why Freud was never granted this honor. The book is peppered with documents: wills, photos, and the like. And the fun only increases when it moves on to texts of the articles written by the various Nobel laureates who competed for the prize.

The fun of this book lies in its seriousness. If it weren't for the subject matter at hand, one would be hard pressed to accept the fact that it's fiction.

Rick says

I have always been fascinated by Stonehenge and this book helped me learn more about this mysterious

structure. However, I was confused about what was fact and what was fiction since the book was convincingly written as a documentary. Honestly, I was hoping that the submissions outlined in the story would be more detailed and closer to what I would imagine the Nobel prizes are intended to be. However, they were not detailed and this left me with the feeling that the book was a bit superficial. It was still historically interesting.

Shonna Froebel says

This novel reads like nonfiction. A psychiatrist is researching why Freud never won a Nobel Prize, and goes through the Nobel Archives in Sweden. He discovers a file containing letters from several people including four Nobel winners. Each letter offers an explanation for some aspect of Stonehenge's origin or construction. As he continues to search for the why behind this file, he discovers a secretive prize that Nobel's executor created drawn of Nobel's intent to put great minds to the mystery of Stonehenge.

Besides offering details of Nobel's life and relationships and the behaviour that led up to the creation of Nobel prizes and his interest in Stonehenge, the novel also offers information about the creation of the Nobel prizes, including this secretive one, and the letters contained in the file.

As the speaker/researcher here is a psychiatrist with an interest in Freud, there are numerous references to Freud, and an appendix containing a Freudian analysis of Nobel. A second appendix discusses radiation poisoning.

There is also a complete list of sources for the quotations used in the novel, a bibliography of works cited in the author's research, and an informative note with acknowledgements from the author.

This is a very imaginative and different novel, drawn from a unique viewpoint. The author is a Canadian psychiatrist and as the book says "This novel is a work of the imagination, although it does incorporate some factual material. We leave it to the reader to determine which elements are indeed verifiably true."

Liviu says

blend of fiction and non-fiction which starts superbly (the part about Nobel's later life and the establishment of the Nobel prizes) but then degenerates into farce to some extent when the Stonehenge stuff appears - the actual vignettes about Pavlov, Marie Curie, Kipling and Roosevelt are relatively interesting but the Stonehenge "solutions" are not, so overall a book that could have been great but ultimately fails in a silly way

kathyrn says

This book is labeled as a novel but when I first started reading it I thought I had misread the description because while I was reading it I thought you mean this isn't a true story? The story begins with a retired psychiatrist going to Sweden to learn why Sigmund Freud never received the Nobel Prize and discovers a series of letters and documents titled the "crackpot files". Alfred Nobel had also setup in his will a prize for discovering the secrets of Stonehenge and besides being secret only winners of the Nobel prize were permitted to enter submissions and the contest only lasted for a period of 10 years.

Among those invited to submit the theories were Teddy Roosevelt, Rudyard Kipling, Madame Curie and Ivan Pavlov and each of their entries are seriously considered but this story isn't true (but the people in the book are real) so what made me keep reading this book because I honestly did not expect to like this book. The book reads like an excellent historical biography of Alfred Nobel complete with a bibliography,

footnotes,(for kindle just touch the footnote and it shows as a pop-up) photographs of the people in the book and more but it's fiction or at least a good bit of it is. In some of the footnotes the author gives comments on what Freud would have thought. It is a quirky book in a class by itself a fictional non fiction book. I read this as a netgalley copy and really enjoyed reading it.

John says

This is very neat... it's a fiction story layered onto the slightly weird history of Nobel and his famous Prize. There's a lot of fascinating and strange historical detail in this book, into which Karlinsky has more or less seamlessly inserted a subplot about Nobel's later-life interest in the "Mystery of Stonehenge". The book is structured as a narrative of discovery on the part of the narrator, a psychiatrist who goes digging in the Nobel archives.

Tamara Petersen says

If you pick this up thinking it will be about Stonehenge and that excites you, then put the book down you will be disappointed, as it isn't really about Stonehenge, rather it was about Alfred Nobel, his will and other well known people who won a Nobel Prize. Stonehenge is just the vehicle used to unite these separate individuals.

That said, I did find it interesting after a fashion.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

What if Alfred Nobel beside the usual prizes also had a "secret" prize for whoever could explain the origin of Stonehenge?

A psychiatrist stumbles over some letters from Nobel laureates with explanations for Stonehenge when he is researching why Freud never got a Nobel Prize.

Harry Karlinsky has really written a book that feels like it could be real. It really feels like reading a thesis and I had to double-check to see that this was fiction. Just to be sure. LOL I mean it sounded ludicrous, but hell, who knew.

The problem I had with this book was the thesis feeling. It made it very dry to read. The part of the book I liked best was actually the biographical part, getting to know the basic fact about Alfred Nobel, Marie Curie, Teddy Roosevelt and Rudyard Kipling. The whole Stonehenge part, the letters from the Nobel laureates was the dry part that and that was unfortunate since that is kind of the point of the book.

But the book was interesting to read and I would very much read more about Alfred Nobel.

I received this copy from Coach House Books through Edelweiss in return for an honest review!
