



Prime Suspect

Lynda La Plante

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An international bestseller, Lynda La Plante's thrilling detective novel *Prime Suspect* introduced readers around the world to Detective Chief Inspector Jane Tennison, a gritty investigator locked in a tooth-and-nail struggle to claim the authority, acceptance, and respect she deserves from Scotland Yard's chauvinist detective squad—even as she desperately tracks the maniac now running loose in the streets of London. Fans of Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone books and the work of Kathy Reichs or Karin Slaughter will be immediately drawn to La Plante's Jane Tennison, the remarkable, no-nonsense police woman who laid the groundwork for all the rest who followed.

Prime Suspect Details

Date : Published (first published 1991)

ISBN :

Author : Lynda La Plante

Format : Kindle Edition 353 pages

Genre : Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Thriller

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From Reader Review Prime Suspect for online ebook

Deborah says

Great writing. Fast paced, character driven and a real page turner.

Bettie? says

Description: *In the dark night of the soul If Detective Chief Inspector Jane Tennison hadn't been a woman, she might not have noticed the victim's shoes and that they didn't match the size given on the info sheet now so obviously misidentifying the dead blonde as a hooker named Della Mornay. Being so thorough, so good at the details, made Jane a top investigator; being a woman made the boys in the squadron want to see her fall on her face. But Jane Tennison was determined to catch the madman stalking women in London's street shadows. She had a prime suspect, and she needed to make the charges against him stick. She also needed to keep her own secret in check: she couldn't let anyone see that she was falling apart inside, as her obsession with cracking this case and breaking out from under the heel of the station house boy's club took over life, destroying her relationship with the man she loved, pushing her closer and closer to the dark urges of a killer*

Donna says

This was just okay for me. It had too many negatives for me to like this. For the most part, the characters weren't at all likable and I could not even relate to them in any way possible. The language, the sense of entitlement, and their prickliness (if that is even a word) did not work for me. And adults behaving like bullies on the playground had me rolling my eyes.

I thought the story, overall, had merit, but it was 'the everything else' that keeps this at 2 stars. And one reason that may be so, is because my absolute-most favorite narrator ever, read this. So that is always a plus and worth a star all on its own.

Rosie says

This was the first Lynda La Plante book I have read and I have never seen Prime Suspect as a TV show, so I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I found this quite a strange book to read. The writing was a bit disjointed and initially there was lots of jumping around. It's easy to tell this has been adapted from a TV script. However, as I read on I noticed the jumping around less and less. The main character, Jane Tennison, comes across as quite a spoilt brat at times! She chucks a tantrum at her father because he accidentally recorded the wrong TV show! In general, I didn't mind her character. She is a strong, independent woman that is trying to stand her ground in a male dominated police force. The author does a very good job at portraying how difficult it can be for a female in the police force. I was disgusted with how some of the male characters were

behaving toward her. The case itself was interesting and kept me engaged for most of the story, though, I didn't find myself being on edge at all and there weren't really any big surprises. Overall, it was an ok, easy to read story. 3.5 stars.

Anna says

This book came up as a recommendation on hoopla. I have never seen the show, so I had no real expectations. I liked how unflinchingly focused Tennison was. In the preface LaPlante talked about how she based the character heavily on a real officer she knew and was more concerned with making her real than likable. This is something that I thought worked really well. I also thought that LaPlante did a great job capturing the gender dynamics in Tennison's home and work life. The depictions of sexism made me so appreciative of the women who came before me while at times making me cringe with continued familiarity. You might wonder why I only gave it 3 stars. I thought that the mystery wasn't particularly strong and that its resolution wasn't particularly satisfying.

Amy says

Prime Suspect was a marvelous British (produced by Granada Television for the ITV network between 7 April 1991 and 22 October 2006. Prime Suspect 4 through 7 were co-produced by WGBH Boston for its Masterpiece Mystery anthology series.) production, which starred the amazing Helen Mirrin as Police detective Jane Tennyson, one of the first females to break into that peculiar boys club of non-uniformed police back in the day. We loved the series, making me eager to read the book which I supposed the show to have been adapted. That, however, was not meant to be.

The TV show (according to the bit by the author at the beginning of this edition, or else the acknowledgments -- I don't have the book on front of me so can't check) sprang from a mention at a lunch with the author and some people in the industry. The book, while well written, is an adaptation of a screenplay. As it was an excellent screen play, the book, too, is good. It is very visual, lots of verbal dialogue though little inner introspection, and reads very much, not surprisingly, like a screen play. Very easy to visualize Mirrin speaking and portraying Tennyson. The part suits her.

Though the book was well written, I'll probably give books 2 and 3 a pass. Prime Suspect still rolls around occasionally on the Telly (the American version or any other newer ones have no interest for me) and I prefer, in this case, to view my Jane on the television screen, not the viewing screen in my brain.

Rounded up from 3.5 since I liked the screenplay so much. I do not, however, like this cover, which must be based on a later version of the series.

Siobhan says

Prime Suspect is one of those television shows I see so often, yet never watch. Why? I'm not sure why, but the knowledge of there being a series of books left me wanting to read the books instead. After all, the television series is really popular and so is Lynda La Plante as an author. In my mind, reading the books was a better choice.

Unfortunately, Prime Suspect was not what I had expected it to be. It wasn't terrible, but at the same time it wasn't great either.

It took me quite some time to get into this one, and I can come up with many possible reasons for this. I tried to read it whilst travelling – something that can be a bit of hit and miss for me. I was travelling late in the day and into the night. I was distracted by what was going on around me. I was tired. I put the book down and picked it up more than once. Although I have many reasons why I may have found it difficult to get into this one, I think they're mostly just excuses. I wanted to enjoy this one, I wanted to be sucked in straight away, but I wasn't – and due to this, I tried to find reasons why I wasn't able to get into the book without pointing fingers at the story.

I think there are actually a number of real reasons as to why I couldn't get into the book. For starters, the prose. It wasn't the worst writing ever, but it did not flow as well as I thought it would. I've read other reviews where they say this is a reflection of Lynda La Plante being a screenwriter, and I can see where such people are coming from. The bigger issue, however, is that the story jumped around a lot. Chapters were cut into many different scenes, meaning you would move between people a lot before any solid information was given. It was rather distracting. Underlying this, I just expected so much more – having heard so many good things I had set my standards rather high.

One other thing that really hit me is how dated this book seems. Things that were said, behaviours of characters, were really dated. The endless sexism, in particular, really grated on me. I understand it was trying to send a message, was trying to create a feminist icon – but it did not come across that way. Some books do transcend time, but I do not feel as though this will ever be one of them.

Whilst I did have issues with the book, I was interested enough to read until the end. It was somewhat different than other crime novels, in that it is trying to find evidence of who was behind the crime rather than searching out the individual. It is not something you see all that often, and it was something different to enjoy.

Although I did not enjoy this book as much as I had hoped, and it will never enter my list of favourite crime novels, I'm glad I finally gave it a read.

Ann says

I recently watched the prequel, Prime Suspect: Tennison on PBS and knew I had to go back and read the books. Book one did not disappoint. The obstacles and pressure Jane encounters as she leads her first murder case grow as the body count climbs.

Faith says

This book reminded me how much I enjoyed the English television series. Interesting, complex and realistic female protagonist and a criminal investigation that held my interest. The narrator of the audio book was excellent.

Christine says

Yay it appeared by magic on my kindle! Wanted to read this for ages. I love Jane Tennison.

David Highton says

The book of the iconic TV drama - the performance of Helen Mirren was so great I had her picture in my mind for the Tennison character all the way through

John says

I have huge admiration for Lynda La Plante the TV screenwriter. Sadly, after reading two of her novels -- of which this is the second -- I'm less enthused by Lynda La Plante the novelist.

The story of *Prime Suspect* is well enough known that I'll not rehash much of it here. DCI Jane Tennison must solve the case of a viciously sadistic serial rapist/murderer in the teeth of the male-chauvinist-piggery of her colleagues. She does indeed solve the case and in the process converts the colleagues into her fervent supporters.

There's no real mystery involved because, aside from a rather half-hearted red herring in the middle of the book (it's started but never really goes anywhere, just gets forgotten about), there's only one suspect in view. Jane's relationship with her live-in boyfriend collapses but, since she doesn't seem to care very much that he's moved out, neither do we. Another reason we don't care is that he's never been a person to us, just a name. In fact, as I was reading the novel I realized that *none* of the characters stood out as characters to me with the exception of Jane Tennison herself, and she did so only because I was reading her as the Helen Mirren portrayal. If I pushed Mirren's version out of my mind, it became plain that the book's rendering of Tennison was so wildly inconsistent that it was hardly a characterization at all.

The writing, too, is surprisingly rough, with odd repetitions of phrasing and a general jerkiness that makes the text read like an unpolished first draft -- like that novel we wrote in our teens and wisely left in a drawer somewhere. There's also the occasional thoggery:

He was a rotund man, oddly pear-shaped with most of his weight in his backside, topped off with a shock of thick, gray hair and an unruly gray beard.

I'd happily recommend the first series of *Prime Suspect* to anyone. The novelization? Not so much.

Fiona says

Lynda La Plante writes for television, most often - she is the queen of the ITV police procedural. *Prime*

Suspect was originally a TV series, starring Helen Mirren as DI Jane Tennison, one of my first feminist icons. I love police procedurals, I love lady-detectives, I love women with ambition who buoy themselves up because nobody else is going to do it for them.

It's a shame that Lynda La Plante can't write prose. It's not just that it's reminiscent of a screenplay: that can work for a lot of people. (Ann Cleeves, for instance, also writes crime for TV. Anthony Horowitz. Simon Brett.) It's just that La Plante's prose is eyewateringly bad in places. It's a shame, not only because this is a really good plot, but also because she has a lot of things to say.

Crime fiction - and particularly, in my experience, British crime fiction - is pretty progressive in places. It's a genre where women are often predominant writers, often predominant characters with the agency to drive the plot along. Often in police crime, women get the top jobs, LGBT characters save the day - there's a running joke in my family that there are six lesbians in Glasgow, and they all fight crime together. La Plante is foremost among these: I remember my mum lending me a copy of *Bella Mafia* when I was about thirteen, and having a whale of a time with it. But this is the thing: crime fiction has been my thing for as long as I've *had* a thing, literary-wise; and as a millennial, brought up in a feminist environment, with plenty of role models and books like these, it's difficult for me to understand that things haven't always been like this. I've met sexism in the workplace. If I told my mother - which sometimes I have - she'd chuckle dryly, and probably point me at a book like this.

Grit. That's the thing. In the progressive end of a progressive genre, it's good for me to see the glass ceiling in action, and the incredible courage of women I know and see as mentors. They all seem to have stories. My mother, the self-employed management prodigy, still gave up work to have me. (It took not very long at all before she got itchy feet and set up a children's clothing business, a fact which never ceases to amuse me.) I grew up with a certain amount of expectation that I was going to have to choose between running the world, and not being on my own. Not even having kids and a great work-life balance. Just, not being on my own.

It's important to me right now, because I've just become self-employed. These questions, and how lucky I really have it, are at the sharp edge of my consciousness at the moment. For good or ill.

That's the background to where I was when I read *Prime Suspect*, where workplace sexism isn't an undercurrent so much as a continuous set of white-water rapids, and in which one of the characters thinks this to himself:

If the truth was on the line, there was a side to her that he hated, that masculine, pushy side. She had never been his kind of woman, and he doubted if any man could cope with a woman who loved her career more than anything else.

That's me! And that muttering noise you hear is me thanking anyone and everyone I can find to thank that it is no longer 1991! I know you know all this, that there's sexism in the world and it's wrong, but *Prime Suspect* just voiced some of my fears about exactly the decisions I'm currently making in life, through the medium of a thing I've loved for a long time, and part of the reason it's getting more stars than the prose style deserves is because now I'm going to make those decisions EVEN HARDER!

Do I sound a bit hysterical there? If not, go back and read it again, only slightly more hysterically. I think I'm a bit hysterical at the moment.

So, the plot. I really got on with the the plot, as well. It's without holes, it's clever, it abides by the rules and it

does it well. Prostitutes get murdered, which is a bit of a red flag for me, but it's not only prostitutes and it's not because that's what they do with their lives. They're humanised. They're cared about. They're written by a person who doesn't just want young, pretty, faceless victims. There's no hoeing as motive here.

The ending is well-executed, the police station believable. Someone else on Goodreads complained it had too many Britishisms in it. Well, sorry, that person; I didn't spot them, which must mean it's just how we speak. Nobody eats crumpets or uses Cockney Rhyming Slang, I don't know what you're complaining about.

I liked it; I wanted to love it. La Plante has great ideas, and a way with writing the puzzle. You can see she's very practiced at that. She must be doing something right, she's got a CBE for doing it. It's just that her descriptions made me want to poke my own eyes out, it's like she was writing with a sledgehammer. If you can get over that sort of thing, maybe you'll like it too.

Siân says

Finally read Prime Suspect having loved the original TV series from '91. Was a little surprised that I found the TV series superior. Read it in a few hours, entertaining enough read but was a touch disappointed. Jane is a great character but felt all the others pretty much cardboard cut-outs.

Gary says

Having recently read the excellent Anna Travis series by Lynda La Plante, I decided to read the Prime Suspect books by the same author that I know so well from the television. I found already been familiar with the characters and having the actors faces in my mind the book was a satisfying read.

In both the series I have mentioned above, Lynda La Plante's main character is an extremely strong woman that is dedicated to her profession and ruthless to others. In Jane Tennison you have both traits in abundance and for me it was impossible not to think of Helen Mirren while reading this book.

The story focuses on the death of a prostitute named Della Mornay. Jane Tennison is handed the investigation when the lead investigator dies of a heart attack. Jane suffers both sexism from her colleagues and abuse for daring to question her much loved predecessors actions and methods. Jane notices that mistakes in the identification of the dead body were made and this changes the investigation drastically. As per other La Plante novels I have read the story is told with a large portion of sub plots and also follows the main characters private life. I like this side of her writing as it gives the characters more depth especially when they are part of a series.
