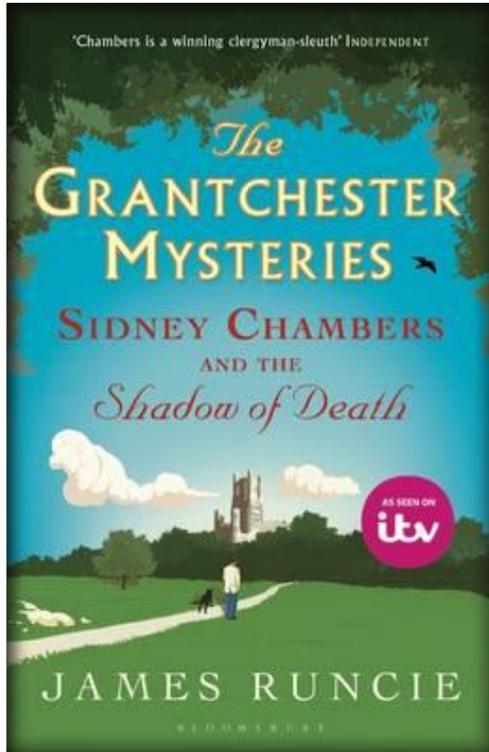




Helping you choose
your next book

LoveReading Reader reviews of **Sidney Chambers and the Shadow of Death** by James Runcie

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.



Phylippa Smithson

A fun to read and certainly more meaty than an Agatha Christie but never going to win a literary award.

Sidney does not conform to the typical behaviour of a clergyman, which is his chosen vocation. And his friend, George makes for a mischievous Police Inspector. However, the friendship is based on a healthy shared humour and banter despite their different working lives. And when they blend this with their shared determination to fight for the wrong doing of some on others, they make for a perfect investigating team.

And it is when a woman shares with Sidney, who has just performed the funeral service of an employee of her husband, her belief that he was murdered, the priest starts to find more reasons to believe her than not.

The investigation also leads the two friends along a path of jewellery theft, a suspicious death and art forgery, all swilled down with the odd pint of beer or two, and a tippie or two of whisky.

The strength Sidney brings to any police investigation is that he can be neutral and gain the confidence of others when the police, at times, cannot.

As I say, good fun to read and definitely one for any Agatha Christie fan. Enjoyed it.

Elisabeth Thomas

Excellent read - very enjoyable.

'Sidney Chambers and the Shadow of Death' is the first book in The Granchester Mysteries featuring Canon Sidney Chambers and Inspector Geordie Keating.

Sidney is the 32 year vicar of the parish of Granchester but in addition to his parochial duties he enjoys a bit of amateur sleuthing to help his good friend Inspector Keating solve murders and mysteries.

This book is a collection of six individual short stories. Each one is a separate story but the stories are all linked with underlying stories and common characters so unlike some collections these stories do need to be read in the order that they are in the book.

With the first book being set in 1953 and 1954, this series is perfect for fans of Agatha Christie, GK Chesterton and Dorothy L Sayers. I will definitely be reading the others in the series.

<https://www.facebook.com/ListheBookworm/>

Cathy Small

Grantchester at its best. Canon Sidney Chambers is full time priest and part time detective. He seems to be in the wrong place and the wrong time or as a priest he is trusted to listen to the truth.

Canon Sidney Chambers is the priest of Grantchester and he serves his parish but he also works as a part time detective for the local police due to being involved in unfortunate events. He has a friendship with the local inspector but when someone is murdered his mistress trusts Sidney to tell him her concerns. Sidney is caught in the middle of the investigation and this continues through several police investigations unfortunately to the detriment of his pastoral duties according to Mrs McGuire. An enjoyable book of mysteries that are lighthearted and an entertaining read.

Judith Sharp

The start of a wonderful series. As well as being a detective series it is also a trip through time starting in the 50's.

Sidney Chambers is a clergyman who also happens to solve mysteries. The book is set in the fifties with the war a recent memory and still impacting on the

lives of many people.

I really enjoyed this book. The mysteries are a nice length, you get to feel for and like the people involved as the fifties come alive within the pages.

Plus once you have read this one you have the pleasure of four more books with a new one due out soon.

Many will have seen the TV series 'Granchester' which is based on the books but the books are so much more so don't hesitate to buy and read them.

Evelyn Love-Gajardo

Fans of the 'Sidney Chambers' series will not be disappointed by this book. If you haven't read any of the series, it will make you want to go back and read the rest.

It has all the characters we have come to know and love, and a new and important character is introduced. The features which make the books so enjoyable are all

here- lots of period detail, a blend of humour and mystery and a satisfying conclusion to each investigation.

I love these books, and enjoyed this one as much as the others I have read. I look forward to the next in the series.

Marjorie Lacy

I did see the series on I.T.V. and really enjoyed it. Reading the book adds depth to Sydney's thinking and motivations that you don't get from a screen offering.

What a time warp - the 1950's!! So different to today. It would make it good holiday reading. It outlines life in a small English village, its Church and Vicar, we get some history, village gossip, some mysteries solved by Sydney and his friend Inspector Keating.

It all adds up to the perfect novel!!

Edel Waugh

This was such a fun story set in a small village primarily and centred around clergyman Canon Sydney Chambers. Sydney is a likeable man, young, social

and always finding himself in the centre of trouble, which makes for great reading! The story feels like a lot of short stories combined to make one large story about Sydney and his friends and it takes place in London and the countryside. **There is thievery, murder, deception, and all sorts of red herrings ! This was a fantastic read and I can't wait to read more in this series!** If you enjoy a satisfying mystery series like those of M.C Beaton then this is just the book for you.

Angie Rhodes

Granchester, the sleepy little village in Cambridge, where you could not imagine anything bad could happen, but how wrong you would be!

Sidney Chambers the lovable vicar, who truth be told would love to be a policeman, so **with his friend the roguish Inspector Geordie Keating they investigate, crime in a most unusual unconventional way.**

This book has them investigating everything from a suspected suicide, theft and murder. For those familiar with the TV Series, you will hear the voices

of Robson Green and James Norton, as you read, which gives the books the feeling of visiting old friends. Love these books!

Jan Kirkcaldy

Having watched the TV series, I found this selection of short stories an enjoyable and easy read. The unlikely pairing of Inspector Geordie Keating, a middle aged detective with a wife and family, and the younger jazz loving cleric, Canon Sidney Chambers, works extremely well. Sidney's does not always seem at one with church life as his elderly housekeeper regularly reminds him and his relationship with a divorced woman Amanda Kendall and her baby is a testing one. The love of his life she may be but it's a difficult situation to resolve, so he is easily drawn into crime solving with his friend Geordie.

Set in Cambridge in the fifties, it is well characterised and what I would call classic "who-dunnits" for those who don't need horrific descriptions and bad language. This book made a pleasant change. Hope I can find more to read.

Kathy Howell

This is a well written collection of short stories following Sidney Chambers, the vicar of Grantchester and part time detective.

His position as a clergyman means that people talk to him in a way that they would not talk to the Police. He works with his friend, Inspector Geordie Keating, to unravel several mysteries and is able to bring a different view to their investigations.

The diversity of people Sidney and Geordie meet and the different types of mystery they are called on to solve is well thought out and the main characters are well written and come alive on the page. The stories cover a suspected suicide, a jewellery theft, death in a jazz club as well as an art fraud.

I enjoyed reading these stories and will look for more in the series.

Helen Clark

Sidney's detective work includes visiting a seedy jazz club, tracking down forged paintings for a Lord and a murder on stage of an amateur dramatic play. Each one utterly gripping.

It's 1953 and Canon Sidney Chambers notices an elegant lady waiting in the shadows of the church porch, just after he had officiated at a funeral of a Cambridge solicitor. Unbeknown to him, this chance meeting heralds the start of Sidney's unexpected role as a detective. His ease of manner and kind, honest face invites her to confide sensitive secrets and leads Sidney to investigate the apparent suicide and ultimately overturns the conviction of suicide to murder. His sense of satisfaction is complete.

Working closely with his friend Police Inspector George Keating; his sister Jennifer's best friend and flatmate Amanda Kendall, Sidney goes on to expose a jewel thief at a private dinner party he attends. Amanda is the beautiful daughter of a wealthy diplomat, has immense presence and is often thought of as outspoken and contrasts Sidney's benign and gentle character. Working together, the trio became an unlikely team of sleuths.

The strictures of restraint as a Canon and his calling as a messenger of God sometimes conflicts with his detective work, but Sidney's motives are to understand what happened and to help people. Finding out the truth involves Sidney in visiting a seedy jazz club, tracking down forged paintings for a Lord of the realm and a murder on stage of an amateur dramatic play. All these crimes are interlinked, makes gripping reading and leaves the reader wanting

more.

Rebecca

*Easy reading, very enjoyable, nice to just sit back and get lost in the story. Six short stories set in the 1950s near Cambridge. **This is a really lovely book, all of the short stories are absorbing, and watching the characters and their relationships develop over the six stories is really nice.***

Unlike some short stories, the plots themselves don't seem rushed, it all just develops quite naturally, with the main character of Sidney Chambers being very appealing and easy to relate to.

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Joy Bosworth

Not what one would expect

When I tried the TV series it seemed so stilted and self-consciously a period piece that I assumed it is better to read it. I was wrong. Ignoring the fact that Chambers thinks he resembles Kenneth Moore - which James Norton certainly does not, I find the it isn't better to read it!

The dull, smog-laden existence of well to do men and brittle women it conveys evokes very accurately the post war late 1940s gloom. But except for one reference to rationing having ended and of a Coronation souvenir cup being used there is no hint of the New Elizabethan hysteria which pervaded this time. Even now old newsreel footage shows the celebratory take on everything, but in Grantchester we are still in the gloom.

That the local clergyman becomes involved in a crime is feasible, that he keeps on doing so and that the local police encourage his involvement is less likely. Why he would have studied to be a vicar and end up in a cushy parish with a side-line teaching at Cambridge only to neglect it for his plodding deductions is not explained

I felt I must be overlooking something likeable about the character but when he explained he does not particularly like dogs it confirmed all I had suspected. When he is irresponsibly given one he doesn't look after him very well and adds dog care to his list of failed duties, it does not unearth a likeable facet as one may have hoped.

I found a couple of expressions like ""hipster"" and someone being ""bored of""

rather unlikely for the 1950s and whereas this is acceptable in light chick-lit I gather this is to be viewed more as a serious work.

I tried but found it at best unappealing and quite annoying.

Beverley Davenport

Sidney is a vicar with a difference, drawn into police investigations by his friend Inspector Geordie Keating, delving into mysteries from pulpit to jazz bars.

Sidney is a vicar with a difference. He is a conscientious caring clergyman, drawn into police investigations by his good friend Inspector Geordie Keating, using his sharp mind and passion for justice and fairness to get to the truth - not to mention his unique place within the community to gain access to places and people, not readily available to the police force. Compassionate and passionate, Sidney is both fallible and wise, staunchly moral but daringly progressive, and his humanity and humanness is both charming and endearing. From pulpit to jazz bars, Sidney Chambers is able to embrace life and engage with people; delving into medical mysteries, jewel thefts, questionable suicides, Soho murders, lost works of art and deadly dramatics.

James Runcie has created a delightful character with hidden depths, well crafted mysteries to keep you guessing, the complexity of friendships and relationships, and tales that welcome you into the (not always) Great British culture of the 1950's-60's."

Ann Quintilla

A vicar is a detective solving crimes for his friend, Inspector Geordie Keating

The action takes place in the 1950s when life was ostensibly more refined than it is today. Sidney Chambers is the vicar of Grantchester but is unable to confine himself to his parish duties. When a Cambridge solicitor commits suicide doubts arise as to whether it was suicide or murder and Sidney shares them with his friend Inspector Geordie Keating. He plays detective, forges a friendship with the widow and solves the mystery.

Sidney has friends in the higher echelons of society and is present at a dinner party when an engagement ring disappears. It is Sidney who discovers who has taken it.

A lover of jazz he is at a London nightclub with a female friend when the

proprietor's daughter is murdered. Again it is Sidney who identifies the murderer.

His great friend, Amanda, a fine art expert, attempts to trace the original of a forged painting in Lord Taversham's house. Her detective work puts her in great danger and she is rescued by Sidney Chambers.

The way these stories are written is charming even though murder and crime is not but they take you back to an era when the nastier side of life was concealed.

Although it is unlikely that a police detective would have sent a vicar out to question suspects, these stories are well told and are entertaining as the reader learns about Sidney's private life and the woman he clearly loves but who seems to be beyond his social and financial reach.