

LoveReading Reader reviews of The Peculiar Life of a Lonely Postman By Denis Theriault

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.

Cath Humphris

This quirky poetic story is a treat. Bilodo the post-man's adventure in love and Japanese poetry is delightful. Like the Haiku, it's a series of concise contrasts and surprises.

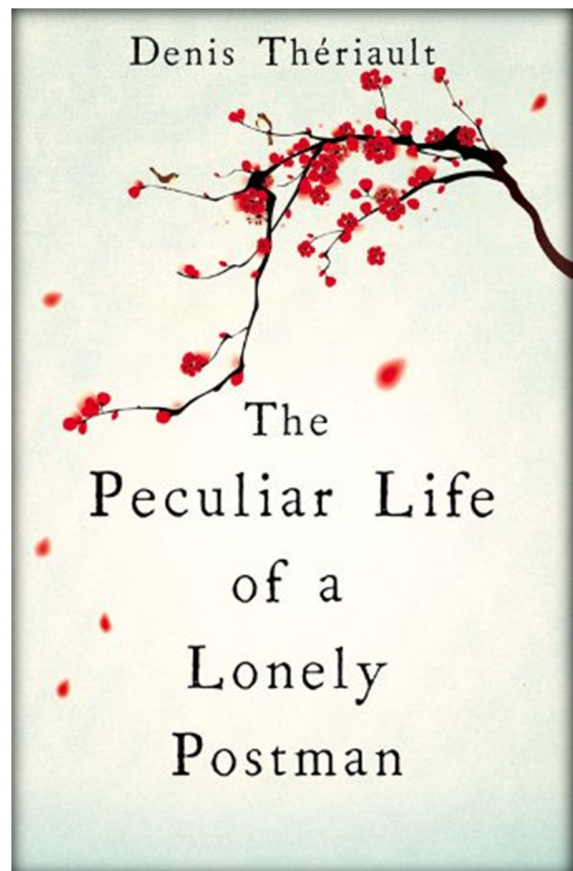
I really enjoyed this novel. From the opening description of Bilodo's job, and the detailed explanation of the daily challenge he sets himself - 'without it, his life would have seemed quite flat,' I was hooked, wondering how things would work out for our unlikely hero.

Is he sensitive, or daft - or both? He's certainly daring, willing to take risks for love and art.

I liked the way the Haiku are introduced, and threaded through the story. The descriptions of Bilodo's struggles to write were a lovely way to introduce us to Japanese poetry.

As a bonus, there are additional notes on Haiku at the back, if we want to learn more, and biographies of the main poets. All as nicely written as the rest of the book.

Hint: 'Don't skip reading the Haiku at the start of chapter 1.



Katy Noyes

A snake eats its own tale in this short novel with shades of both 'Amelie' and 'Cyrano de Bergerac'.

What a beautifully told tale. Sparse, like the Haiku it contains, and elegant. A lonely postman in Montreal secretly steams open mail to correspondents in his round. Living vicariously through their love letters and missives, his favourites come from a woman sending intriguing poems to a local man. By chance he one day sees this same man killed by a car on his way to post a reply. Can he allow the woman he has fallen for to stop sending the poems he loves? Or can he intervene?

There's the lightest touch of comedy here but really, it's a romance of words, as Bilodo begins his own halting stream of haikus with the enigmatic Segolene. The poetry is beautiful, the story rounded even at a span of just over 100 pages. And the ending is a delightful and satisfying surprise, perfectly suited to the theme of the story.

A nod to the translator who has done an excellent job with the poetry.

A beautiful tale. One that I could see making the KS4 syllabus alongside 'Metamorphosis' or Of 'Mice and Men' as a modern classic of a novella.

Edel Waugh

*This is the story of a 27 year old postman called Bilodo. Bilodo is a lonely man who lives in Montreal, likes routines, works hard and begins to enjoy his private life more and more after committing a great crime through his work. I found Bilodo to be a very interesting character, his fantasy life is very important to him and he is so practical in his work life you are amazed that when he finishes work you get to see the real man, the secrets, the lies, his hopes and dreams. **If you ever had a moment where you wondered what if... Then this philosophical story is for you.***

Sally Doel

This book is not terribly long, but is well worth a read. I read it quite quickly (in between everything else) and I really enjoyed it. It centres on Bilodo, the lonely postman of the title.

Bilodo lives on his own and is a conscientious worker, delivering the post everyday. His one 'vice' in life is steaming open other people's letters and

getting involved in their lives. It is through this hobby of his that he comes across, and becomes engrossed in, Segolene's letters to a poet, Gaston Grandpre. He gets more and more involved in their poetry to each other, until the fateful day when he witnesses Gaston's untimely demise in an accident.

Bilodo is so reluctant to let Segolene's letters go, he decides that he will imitate Gaston's poems to Segolene to keep their correspondence flowing. He tries to learn as much as he can about Grandpre, to fully immerse himself in his life, so that he can be a convincing replacement and not arouse Segolene's suspicions.

This is a story with love and tragedy and revelations, with deception and lies thrown in! It is a very easy to read book and though I have never read anything by this author before, I was quite taken with it and thought about it a lot...

Megan Williams

A surprising tale that despite all initial sweet and harmless appearances, manages to pack a punch which is unexpectedly powerful for such a small novel.

'The Peculiar Life of a Lonely Postman' is a surprising tale that despite all initial sweet and harmless appearances, manages to pack a punch which is unexpectedly powerful for such a small novel. As we follow Bilodo, the lonely postman, on his daily postal rounds we quickly discover a somewhat troubled side to his character. This troubled side soon sours and takes on a more sinister hue and although at times I found myself cringing with a deep discomfort at just what Bilodo might do next I found myself incapable of putting the book down. The author, Denis Theriault, in my view has created a captivating piece of fiction which is highly unique and original. It will undoubtedly leave an impression with all of its readers. A short thought-provoking novel, not to be taken lightly.

Clare Topping

Bilodo lives alone and has only one friend, who he doesn't really like. A postman, who intercepts mail, and reads the letters inside, finds himself falling in love with one of the writers. Ségolène, who is corresponding in Haiku with Gaston. When Gaston is hit by a car and killed Bilodo, devastated at the prospect of losing Ségolène's poetry, takes over the correspondence.

This is an interesting idea, stolen identity, but by a likeable character, a

relationship built in haiku that turns into an obsession when Bilodo takes a leave of absence from his job to concentrate on his correspondence. The story gains momentum and speed and becomes a surprising page turner as the correspondence becomes more frequent. The reader is left wondering how long the deception will continue and where it will end. I must admit that I didn't see the ending coming, perhaps in hindsight I should.

What lets the book down is not the use of haiku, but the way the author includes the concepts in the story - quite lamely by Bilodo visiting the library and reading about it. Much better would be to have just included it in an introduction - or referred the reader to the back of the book where the relevant information is included (some of which is repeated word for word in the story).

At just over 100 pages this is an afternoon's read, enjoyable, a bit different, but with room for improvement.

Lisa Faulkner

*'The peculiar life of a lonely postman' is a **quirky and interesting novel**. Fans of Japanese Culture and the poetry of Haiku will thoroughly enjoy the story as Theriault richly interweaves it throughout the tale. **An enjoyable and thought provoking read.***

Jayne Burton

A captivating and surprising book - and I loved it.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading about Bilodo, a postman living a solitary life in Montreal. We follow him on his daily journey delivering mail and stopping for lunch at his local cafe, before returning to his apartment alone. To add interest to his otherwise dull life he has taken to intercepting mail before delivering them to their rightful owners. When he comes across Segolene's letters to Gaston, he is spellbound by her and her writings in haiku and his life changes forever.

Such an unusual tale, I was drawn into his life and, like him, couldn't wait for the next letter to arrive.

*This is such a charming story with a surprising ending, and written in a style I came to thoroughly enjoy. **I am sad I have finished it and can't recommend it highly enough.** I think we all ought to read this book and gain a little insight into our own souls.*

Wendy Stubbs

Peculiar, as in the title of the book. But a compelling and thought-provoking story. Love through poetry, deceit and intrigue. Surprisingly engaging story.

It took me the first couple of chapters before I was sure whether this book was for me. It didn't seem to be going anywhere. But perseverance prevailed and I was engaged with the story of this 20 something single, lonely postman who intercepts other people's post. He steams open letters, reads them, reseals them and then delivers them as though they have arrived as normal.

He comes across letters between a Gaudalopean woman and a poet and finds himself caught up in a web of deceit. Following the sudden death of the poet, he pretends to be him, continuing to correspond with the woman and creating poetry. He finds himself falling more and more in love with her and the poetry between them becomes erotic and more regular. The intensity of the poetry and the feelings that it stirs in Bilodo the Postman become more and more intense. The poetry overtakes his whole life, he gives up his job and locks himself away in this web of deceit, love and intensity. How long can this continue, how far can it take him and what will the ultimate result be?

*This book is completely different to anything I have read before and I certainly wouldn't have selected it, had it been put in front of me. However, it was a very good read, one that once you got into you were almost pre-empting what was going to happen next. **Highly recommended.***

Alison Layland

A fascinating novel that really drew me into its world.

Bilodo, the lonely postman of the title, intercepts, copies and hoards some of the letters he delivers, enhancing his colourless world with his personal "interior serial drama". One correspondence in particular captivates him, between poet Gaston Grandpré and the fascinating Ségolène from Guadeloupe. The two correspond entirely in the form of Japanese haiku, and when Grandpré is killed in a road accident Bilodo attempts to keep up his "relationship" with Ségolène, learning how to express himself in haiku and hoping she won't notice the change in correspondent – effectively becoming Grandpré himself. But he is at risk of discovery from his colleagues, and of what would happen if Ségolène wanted them to meet.

The writing style, excellently conveyed by translator Liedewy

Hawke, is a lovely combination of humour and depth, from Bilodo's inner feelings to his interactions with fellow postman Robert, whose merciless teasing gradually descends from banter to cruel mockery. It is also full of the haiku that are a central feature of the story, providing an excellent exploration of this special form of poetry in a way that can be enjoyed both by readers who know little about it and those who already love the form (there are further explanations with examples from Japanese haiku masters in an appendix). Like the verses themselves, the novel takes aspects of everyday life and finds deeper meaning.

It has a surprising twist at the end which makes you want to go back and think it all through again.

Nancy Krois

This is an intriguing book, and a beautifully written one, where French- Canadian and Japanese culture meet.

There is so much to like about 'The Peculiar Life...' It is an intriguing story, beautifully written, one which has as its heart the haiku poem. In some ways this book is a haiku in novel form, if such a thing is possible, as each chapter is very short, and the writing is precise, descriptive and to be savoured. There is almost no dialogue, which is unusual in a novel, and instead one enters the protagonist's world not by what he says, but how his actions are described.

The way the postman enters into the spirit of the haiku builds slowly, until the reader becomes as enamoured of the form as he does and wants to follow wherever it will take him. The ending, while not coming as a complete surprise, was satisfyingly in keeping with the novel as a whole.

How I would have liked to have read the haiku in the original French, as translating these while respecting all the rules of the form would have been challenging.

Mandy Carver

I found this little book easy to read and thought provoking, it was nice to learn about the Haiku poems and you really felt Bilodo's passion for Segolene even though he is bordering on the obsessive, you can understand why he impersonated Gaston as if he hadn't then his only communication with her would have been lost. I was intrigued to read if he would carry on getting away with it especially when I read she had booked her ticket to Canada. I never

expected the ending of the book, it makes you think. To sum up; for a couple of days reading it was an easy read, had it been a long book and I'd spent a long time reading it I would have been disappointed with the ending.