



Montmorency: Thief, Liar, Gentleman

By Eleanor Updale

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Montmorency: Thief, Liar, Gentleman By Eleanor Updale Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #32861 in Audible
- Published on: 2004-06-30
- Format: Unabridged
- Original language: English
- Running time: 304 minutes

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Montmorency: thief, liar, gentleman?, a British import from debut author Eleanor Updale, is a smart, stylish antidote to the proliferation of Buffy novelizations masquerading as mysteries these days. In a London cellblock in 1875, career criminal Montmorency is serving time for burglary. Captured while fleeing police, Montmorency suffered several grievous wounds that attract the attention of a brilliant young doctor named Robert Farcett. When Dr. Farcett displays Montmorency's newly healed body before the membership of London's Scientific Society, Montmorency overhears a presentation on the city's new sewer system that will change his life forever. Once released from prison, Montmorency uses his knowledge of the underground tunnels to steal from some of London's wealthiest neighborhoods. But in order to enjoy his new riches, he must assume a dual lifestyle. By day he is Mr. Montmorency, a mysterious opera going gentleman who resides in one of the city's most affluent hotels. By night, he is drain-dwelling Scarper, a smelly character who keeps a room in a dirty boarding house. How long can he keep up this agonizing pretense before someone, perhaps even the good doctor, recognizes his scars and exposes him as a fraud?

Middle school fans of John Bellairs, Lemony Snicket, and Philip Pullman, will delight in plowing through the cliff hanging pages of *Montmorency*. Updale's prose is clear and plot-driven, full of the kind of fascinating detail about the quirky Victorian thief's dual existence that young mystery readers adore. And, with a sequel coming in 2005, they won't groan too loudly at the wide open, although wholly satisfying ending. (Ages 10 to 14) --*Jennifer Hubert*

From School Library Journal

Grade 6-10-Cunning criminal mastermind Montmorency used his time in prison to devise the ultimate scheme to relieve the Victorian London upper crust of their prized possessions. Tipped off by a clue he heard while serving as a guinea pig in a medical seminar, Montmorency decides that the ghastly city sewers are his ticket to fame and fortune. And once out of prison, he heads straight below ground where he can enter and leave the apartments of his victims without a trace. Stealing enough goods to buy a room at one of London's poshest hotels, Montmorency discovers that the leisure-filled life he dreams of is finally within reach. Only then can he move to phase two of his plan. He devises an alter ego: Scarper, the sly thief and humble servant of the more esteemed and gentlemanly Montmorency. In true Shakespearean form, the "two" men dive in and out of scenes with astute deftness, duping less fortunate (and sometimes deserving) characters with hilarious aplomb. Peculiarly enough, Updale's seamless historical novel contains no true adolescent characters. Yet the transitional stages of Montmorency's entry into society and evolving sense of self-discovery resemble the paths taken by many famous teen protagonists. Readers will find themselves drawn not only to Montmorency's compellingly bizarre biography, but also to his clever and mischievous nature that eventually leads him to both a realization of his past wrongs and a valid career where he can put his "best" skills to good use.-*Hillias J. Martin, New York Public Library*

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 6-9. "Sewage stinks, but rich people, on the whole, don't." This truism forms the core of Updale's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*-style crime story. When thief Montmorency isn't living the high life as a respectable gentleman, he plays the role of his own servant, Scarper, who skulks through sewage tunnels to steal from London's wealthiest neighborhoods. Instead of greeting Montmorency/Scarper's misdeeds with a karmic comeuppance, Updale openly admires the ingenuity of a con artist who is able to maneuver within rigidly stratified Victorian society. Many readers will find the absence of a moral slant refreshing, and

Montmorency's heart-pounding brushes with discovery add a palpable layer of suspense. It's tough to pinpoint the target audience, though--some readers will react negatively to the absence of characters their own age, and find the abundant period details overly fussy (in one scene, Montmorency lingers over the subtle flavors of whisky). This will appeal the most to older kids who enjoy immersing themselves in historical atmosphere, including some adult devotees of Victorian detective fiction. A sequel is planned for 2005. *Jennifer Mattson*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Matthew Waddell:

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