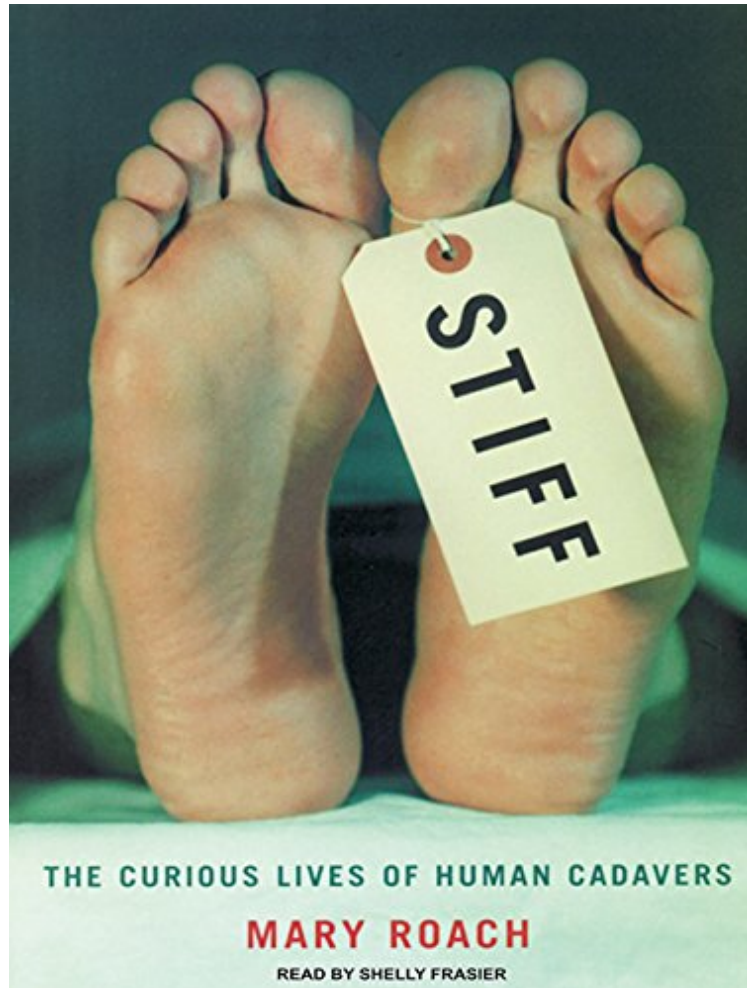


Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers

Mary Roach

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Mary Roach : Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Could not put this one down...By CustomerLove all her works, fascinating and written so that it is palatable to anyone. It is not a in your face gore fest, its just a really well balanced and fun read for such a serious topic.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not morbid! Fascinating!By PugmomThis book is full of interesting facts that you never thought to wonder about! People who generously donate their bodies save lives in ways that the living can hardly imagine. This book is not morbid or grisly, just fascinating. Mary Roach's research is thorough and complete with an appropriate touch of humor.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A little graphic for meBy E. ChambersI am a Mary Roach fan, so I thought I would love this book. I did enjoy the author's writing style and I find her quite clever. However, the subject matter was a little too difficult for

me. If I was not reading it for my book club, I don't think I would have gotten past the chapter on plastic surgery. Some of it was fascinating, but some of the topics were a little hard for me to take. The verdict from my book club was about half and half. Half didn't finish it, and the other half liked parts of it, but also found it a hard subject to read about in such detail. I will say I learned a lot and a definite opinion on donating my body to science after reading this book.

An oddly compelling, often hilarious exploration of the strange lives of our bodies postmortem. For 2,000 years, cadavers-some willingly, some unwittingly-have been involved in science's boldest strides and weirdest undertakings. They've tested France's first guillotines, ridden the NASA Space Shuttle, been crucified in a Parisian laboratory to test the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin, and helped solve the mystery of TWA Flight 800. For every new surgical procedure-from heart transplants to gender reassignment surgery-cadavers have been there alongside surgeons, making history in their quiet way. In this fascinating, ennobling account, Mary Roach visits the good deeds of cadavers over the centuries-from the anatomy labs and human-sourced pharmacies of medieval and nineteenth-century Europe to a human decay research facility in Tennessee, to a plastic surgery practice lab, to a Scandinavian funeral directors' conference on human composting. In her droll, inimitable voice, Roach tells the engrossing story of our bodies when we are no longer with them.

From Publishers Weekly "Uproariously funny" doesn't seem a likely description for a book on cadavers. However, Roach, a Salon and Reader's Digest columnist, has done the nearly impossible and written a book as informative and respectful as it is irreverent and witty. From her opening lines ("The way I see it, being dead is not terribly far off from being on a cruise ship. Most of your time is spent lying on your back"), it is clear that she's taking a unique approach to issues surrounding death. Roach delves into the many productive uses to which cadavers have been put, from medical experimentation to applications in transportation safety research (in a chapter archly called "Dead Man Driving") to work by forensic scientists quantifying rates of decay under a wide array of bizarre circumstances. There are also chapters on cannibalism, including an aside on dumplings allegedly filled with human remains from a Chinese crematorium, methods of disposal (burial, cremation, composting) and "beating-heart" cadavers used in organ transplants. Roach has a fabulous eye and a wonderful voice as she describes such macabre situations as a plastic surgery seminar with doctors practicing face-lifts on decapitated human heads and her trip to China in search of the cannibalistic dumpling makers. Even Roach's digressions and footnotes are captivating, helping to make the book impossible to put down. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From School Library Journal Adult/High School-Those curious or brave enough to find out what really happens to a body that is donated to the scientific community can do so with this book. Dissection in medical anatomy classes is about the least bizarre of the purposes that science has devised. Mostly dealing with such contemporary uses such as stand-ins for crash-test dummies, Roach also pulls together considerable historical and background information. Bodies are divided into types, including "beating-heart" cadavers for organ transplants, and individual parts-leg and foot segments, for example, are used to test footwear for the effects of exploding land mines. Just as the nonemotional, fact-by-fact descriptions may be getting to be a bit too much, Roach swings into macabre humor. In some cases, it is needed to restore perspective or aid in understanding both what the procedures are accomplishing and what it is hoped will be learned. In all cases, the comic relief welcomes readers back to the world of the living. For those who are interested in the fields of medicine or forensics and are aware of some of the procedures, this book makes excellent reading. Pam Johnson, Fairfax County Public Library, VA Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Not grisly but inspiring, this work considers the many valuable scientific uses of the body after death. Drawn from the author's popular Salon column. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.