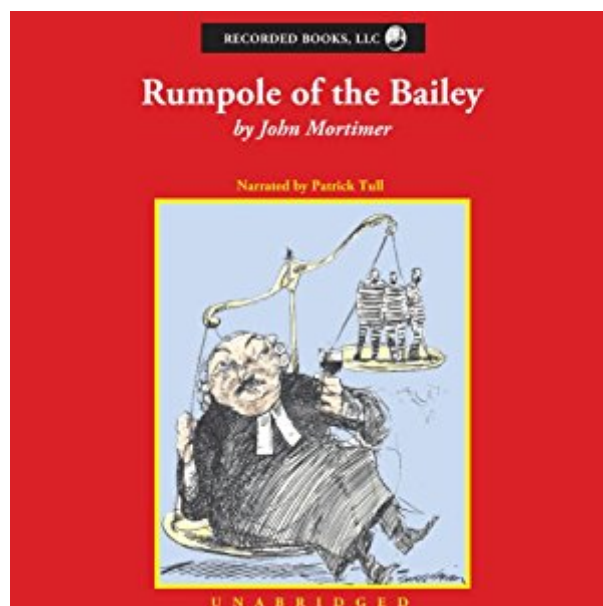


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Rumpole Of The Bailey [Recorded Books]



Synopsis

In the first of six witty short stories, 60s-something English barrister, Horace Rumpole, takes on the younger generation both at home and in the hallowed courtroom-while offending his esteemed colleagues and his draconian wife, Hilda.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The inaugural book in the Rumpole saga presents one of the great characters of British crime fiction. It's Holmes with humor (excuse me; humour), Bertie Wooster with brains. A collection of short stories, all revolve around Horace Rumpole, a self-described "Old Bailey hack". He practices (almost) exclusively as a defense barrister, specializing in hopeless causes, spouting poetry and cigar ash with equal gusto. The book provides the background for the accompanying series on "PBS", and it is at least as much a credit to Leo McKern's portrayal of Horace Rumpole as it is to author John Mortimer's skill that the stories--now contained in three massive omnibuses--have such deep appeal.

This book is a great introduction to English barrister, Horace Rumpole, an Old Bailey hack who has been around the London courts for many years. Rumpole has no aspirations to "take silk"-becoming a Queens Counsel, and is perfectly happy as a defence lawyer, mostly representing criminals of the non-violent variety. We also meet his wife Hilda, "She Who Must Be Obeyed", who, after all these years, still envisions herself as the wife of Head of Chambers. All of the other characters who occupy the Rumpole stories emerge in these short tales--sneaky, slightly effeminate Erskine-Brown,

the bumbling Guthrie Featherstone and the other lawyers and clerks whose lives weave in and out of these stories. You'll love them all and particularly cigar smoking, claret swilling Rumpole himself.

Witty and incisive, *Rumpole of the Bailey* contains six short stories about a British barrister as he takes on cases, deals with colleagues and family, and travels through the ups and downs of his life. Like any lawyer, Rumpole has to wade his way through the varying personalities he has to defend, some of them downright strange. In one case, he is chosen as defense counsel because the family expects him to lose. In another, he defends a British MP accused of rape who wants to be convicted so he can get away from his overly ambitious wife. In a third tale, he is charmed by an attractive hippie who may or may not have been involved in the sale of a considerable amount of what the police always initially refer to as "a leafy substance." One of the most interesting aspects of Rumpole is his humanness. He admits to having been in love, at least emotionally if not physically, with women other than his wife, Hilda, known as *She Who Must Be Obeyed*, to whom he became wed as sort of a professional obligation. He drinks plenty of claret, and lectures his prospective daughter-in-law on the dangers of drinking water. He is saddened when the longtime Head Clerk of Chambers is found to be a petty embezzler, and tries to prevent his firing. While not a bleeding heart for his clients, and not at all blaming society as the impetus for any criminal activity, he is determined to do his best, and he does, once almost at the cost of his reputation and license. I have not seen one solitary second of the television series that made Horace Rumpole a fixture for awhile on public television. I'm glad however, I took the route to Old Bailey.

In "*Rumpole of the Bailey*", John Mortimer has served up a veritable smorgasbord of short snappy tales that are the very best that British courtroom humour has to offer. Whether it's criminal trials in the old Bailey or civil trials in Chancery division, Horace Rumpole takes on all comers with a trademarked irreverent disdain for the sanctity of the law, the court, the judiciary and his learned colleagues at the bar. But, make no mistake, Rumpole's disarming attitude and appearance mask a razor sharp legal mind able to cut directly to the heart of the matter and an ability to draw on brutally cunning legal tactics which, for many American readers, will be reminiscent of the television detective, Columbo. Whether Rumpole is in court or lighting up a cigar and quaffing a glass of Chateau Fleet Street at his favourite after-hours haunt, Pommeroy's Wine Bar, Rumpole is accompanied by an endearing supporting cast that is an integral part of the amusing, indeed often hilarious stories that Mortimer has produced - Guthrie Featherstone QC MP, the stiffly starched and prissy (yet often philandering) head of chambers; Claude Erskine-Brown, the slightly looser barrister

who is head over heels in love with the only female member of chambers, the eloquent and deeply feminist Phillida Trant; Rumpole's wife, Hilda, the imposing "She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed"; and Percy Timson, the patriarch of a widespread London family of low-level criminals whose bumbling failures are destined to keep Rumpole supplied with a steady stream of defense briefs for as long as he cares to work. Hilarious brain candy guaranteed to take you away from the worries of the workaday world for a blissful all-too-short few hours. Highly recommended. Paul Weiss

John Mortimer, a retired barrister (lawyer), offers to take us into the mysterious world of British law. He spoofs the silly, pompous and ego-inflated lawyers he knows while trying to save his defendant from the gallows. He makes fun of 'She Who Must Be Obeyed' and adores his son Nicholas. When in the presence of 'She Who..,' Horace Rumpole feigns obedience while sharing with the reader what he REALLY thinks. If you are looking for some short stories that have flash and/or somber drama, look elsewhere. However, readers who give Rumpole time to spin out his tale will be rewarded with wry wit and a fun look at the British legal system from the inside. I would much rather read a single story vs. several short stories because there, by necessity, is little character development. However, in Mortimer's 21 Rumpole books, he keeps his cadre of cronies. Thus, over the course of a few short stories, we learn the 'modus operandi' of the secondary characters - warts and all. What I love about Rumpole is that he is so irreverent - he's willing to lampoon anyone, including himself. He likes to come across as a foolish oaf; however, watch him harpoon the opposition with clever tactics and a sharp mind. He brings the 'Old Bailey' to life.

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