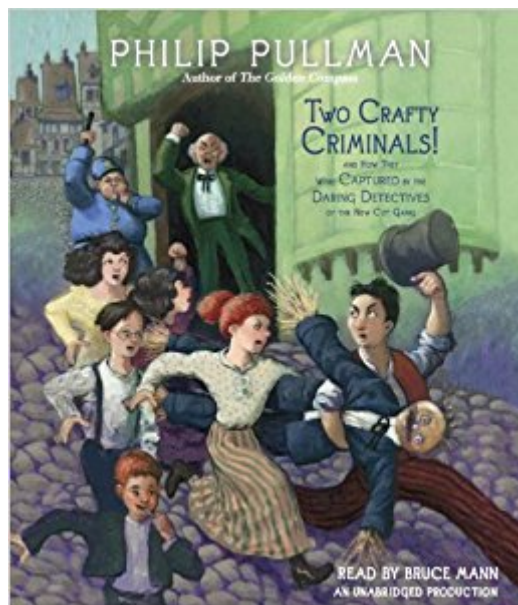




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# Two Crafty Criminals!: And How They Were Captured By The Daring Detectives Of The New Cut Gang



## Synopsis

Benny Kaminsky and Thunderbolt Dobney lead a rag-tag gang of neighborhood rowdies. Their territory is the New Cut on London's South Bank—a place bristling with swindlers, bookies, pickpockets, and the occasional policeman. And their aim is to solve crimes. When counterfeit coins start showing up in their neighborhood, Thunderbolt fears his own father may be behind the crime. But his friends devise a way to trap the real culprit. Then the gang takes on the case of some stolen silver. They have just two clues—a blob of wax, and an unusually long match. But even this slippery thief is unmasked by the determined kids of the New Cut. Filled with silly sleuthing, improbable disguises, crazy ruses, and merry mayhem, these stories are action-packed romps from one of the best storytellers ever—Philip Pullman. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Set in late Victorian London, this features two adventures (not to mention the attendant misadventures) involving the New Cut Gang, a group of children who attempt to solve crimes in their neighborhood and, by luck as much as brains or pluck, manage to discover the culprits. In "Thunderbolt's Waxwork," young Thunderbolt's papa is falsely accused of counterfeiting. In "The Gas-Fitters' Ball," Benny attempts to nab a thief, while the other gang members plot to break a friend out of jail. The two stories were first

published in England in 1994 as the first and second (and evidently final) volumes of the New Cut Gang series. Pullman writes with the younger reader in mind, creating some larger-than-life characters and spicing the stories with humor, though some of the terms used may convey little to American children. New for this edition, Brown's droll, expressive line drawings add to the book's appeal. A possible read-aloud choice for Anglophile households. High-Demand Backstory: Pullman is one of the best youth authors writing today. A new book from him always engenders interest. Grades 3-6. --Carolyn Phelan --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Starred Review, Kirkus Reviews, March 15, 2012: "A strong sense of right and wrong permeates the gleeful absurdity of the New Cut Gang's madcap capers and refreshes the soul." Starred Review, School Library Journal, May 2012: "Advanced younger readers will find great joy in this Victorian detective novel with a sophisticated writing style." Review, The New York Times Book Review, May 13, 2012: "[His stories] prove to be a hoot." From the Hardcover edition.

It was cool, their adventures and plans were really inspiring. It was easy to envision the stories as we read them. We can't wait, we want more.

Two Crafty Criminals by Phillip Pullman is a collection of two stories, featuring a group of young detectives called the New Cut Gang, that were previously published individually in '96 and '98. The stories really are separate from each other and even feature different gang members. The first story, Thunderbolt's Waxwork, follows Sam/Thunderbolt as he tries to figure out who is making the fake currency that has been showing up all over town. His father is suspected, and even Thunderbolt is not entirely sure of his Dad's innocence. Thankfully he has his friends in the New Cut Gang to help him get to the bottom of this mystery. The second story, The Gas fitters ball, features the mischievous twins Angela and Zerlina. Their friends (older) are in love, but having a hard time becoming engaged. To make matters worse, someone has stolen the silver from the Gas Fitters dance hall! I liked the stories, and thought the mysteries were fun and entertaining. I laughed out loud a few times and got into the plot line. This is one of those instances, where I could tell you about the characters, like Sharky who eats everything, Thunderbolt, and how he is brainy but clumsy, or over-imaginative Benny who solves crimes but also gets carried away and it would sound like a hoot. The trouble I had with this book is, it sort of fell flat in the character department. I mean, we are quickly told who these kids are, but then we never really see it. It mentions more than once

that Thunderbolt is excluded out of certain tasks because he is clumsy, but I never once saw him trip or mess up. Sharky was one of my favorite characters and he and Bridie are only mentioned in passing in the second story. I had a hard time remembering who the characters were and felt like I picked this book up mid-series. I know it's hard to balance action and characters in the middle reader age group, but this one fell short for me. There was even a case where the author says that Thunderbolt is only called Sam, except when he is on detective duty but later his Dad calls him Thunderbolt. I know it sounds like I am being nitpicky here, but I felt like the mysteries were fun but the people not as much. The author told us who the people were, but failed to really show it with a few exceptions.

As a mother who screens - or tries to anymore - everything her 13-year-old daughter reads, it's been a while since I read anything by Philip Pullman. Of course, we all know "His Dark Materials" trilogy and "Sally Lockhart" series - but I also enjoyed, when said daughter was much younger, "The Firework Maker's Daughter." I think it's a testament to the genius of the writer, no matter his politics or religious views, that he is able to amass such a varied body of work. "Two Crafty Criminals" is a bind-up re-print of the adventures of the New Cut Gang, first featured in "Thunderbolt's Waxwork" (1994) and "The Gasfitter's Ball"(1995). This is a perfect middle-school introduction to the currently popular steampunk genre. I loved reading about the escapades of these incorrigible kids! The language and tone of the book was perfect, perfect, perfect for the era, and the voice of the characters totally age-appropriate. The best thing about the book? My daughter actually laughed out loud while she was reading it - as did I! Said daughter's review follows:"Two Crafty Criminals! And How They Were Captured by the Daring Detectives of the New Cut Gang' by Philip Pullman was a funny novel about how sometimes kids really \*are\* the best detectives ..."Benny - the leader and genius of the New Cut Gang"Thunderbolt - his right hand man. Bit clumsy but has a good heart."Bridie - with typical Irish red hair and red temper, she helps out with the action parts"Benny - (Irish) Bridie's little brother. Will eat \*anything\* from wax to cork to humbugs."Angela and Zerlina - Italian twins that look like angels and act like devils."These are the members of the New Cut Gang. When, in the summer of 1895, someone starts passing around counterfeit money and stealing antique silver, can the gang solve the mystery if who is doing it? And meanwhile, can they help their friends with their various dreams, from becoming a waxwork dummy to proposing to their girls?"My favorite character would have to either be Bridie, Angela or Zerlina. Of course, they are all girls, but I like how Bridie pretends to be so fierce but will protect her friends, no matter what, and I like how Angela and Zerlina come up with all these crazy plans and actually making them work."My favorite

part would have to be when Angela, Zerlina, and Orlando broke Dick out of prison. That was funny!"I would totally give this book five stars: two stars for the plot, two stars for the characters, and one star for the general cuteness of the book! :-)"

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