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## Book Review: Effigies

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**Evans, Mary Anna.** *Effigies*. Scottsdale, AZ : Poisoned Pen Press, 2007. 301 pp. \$14.95 (paperback). ISBN 13: 9781590584545 (pbk.) ISBN 10: 1590584546 (pbk.) ISBN 13: 9781590583425 (hbk.) ISBN 10: 1590583426 (hbk.) Large Print: ISBN 10: 1590583434 (pap.), ISBN 13: 9781590583432 (pap.)

The third book in the Faye Longchamp Archaeological Mysteries series is set near Philadelphia, Mississippi, against the backdrop of the Neshoba County Fair and in the shadow of Nanih Waiya, the sacred mound of the Choctaw nation. The series protagonist, Faye Longchamp, a graduate archaeology student, is part of a team studying the site where a small road project is planned.

The first of two mysteries in *Effigies* relates to the work of the team. Across the road from the study site is a large mound on private property and there is just enough evidence to suspect this is an effigy mound, a special mound built in the shape of an animal. When the landowner is found dead soon after he tries to destroy the mound, the suspects are many.

A second mystery is introduced during a speech at the Fair when a retired Michigan congressman asks for help to solve the 40-year-old racially motivated attack on himself when he was a teenager living in Neshoba County. In short order, the congressman experiences life-threatening medical complications of unknown origin.

Evans places her story in the present but recalls a time when an African American teenager would leave Mississippi rather than report he had been attacked. She also places her story squarely in the middle of the controversial nature of archaeology work and addresses the cultural sensitivities of unearthing ancient burials for the purposes of studying history and developing real estate and infrastructure. To provide context, Evans uses the character of Mrs. Nail, mother of one of the archaeologists, to tell the stories of the Choctaw people. The narrative progresses over the period of the Neshoba County Fair, beginning with the Prologue on the evening before the Fair opens. Each set of chapters (one day of the Fair) ends with one of Mrs. Nail's stories, which serve to fill the gap between what Faye knows about her own world of science and what lies in the background for each of us: the lore and learning that each culture passes from one generation to the next.

Evans' mysteries are written for an adult audience but are becoming popular with high school students. Teachers will find opportunities to engage students in discussions about the cultural and social aspects of archaeology, as well as the recent and current history of Mississippi. *Effigies* is recommended for any popular reading and mystery fiction collection.

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