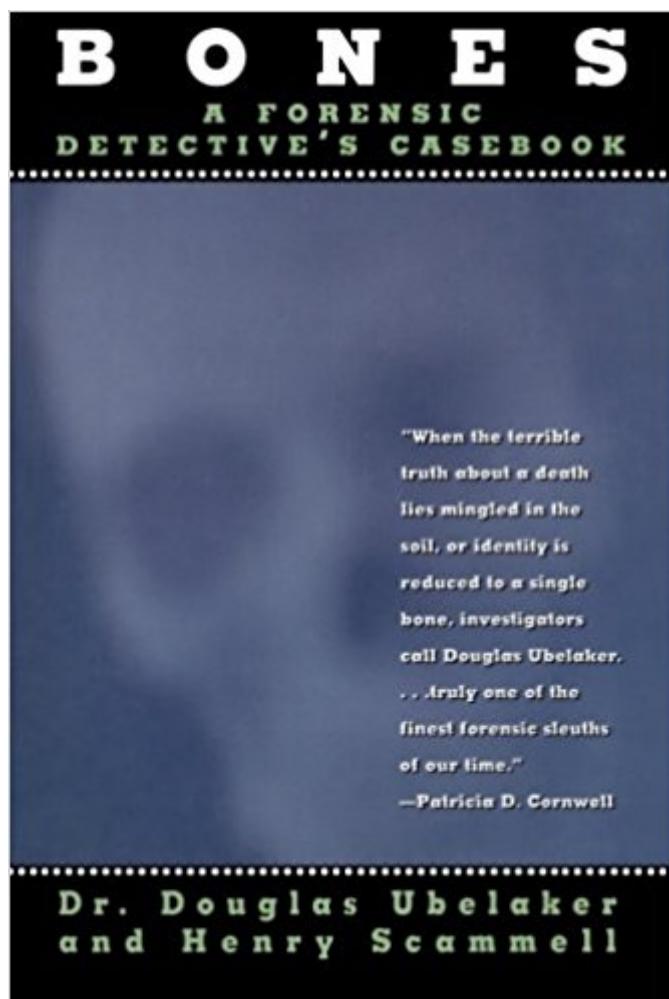


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# Bones: A Forensic Detective's Casebook



## **Synopsis**

Fascinating, educational, and highly readable, *Bones* takes readers into the dark world of forensic science.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Forensic anthropology is a relatively new science, and Ubelaker, curator of anthropology at the Smithsonian Institute, is one of its most notable practitioners. Here, with freelance writer Scammel, he explains how those in the field work with police to solve mysteries lacking clues except for a few bones, on the basis of which experts can determine a victim's race, age and sex and often the cause of his or her death. Though the text is somewhat dry and technical, it can be compelling. The authors discuss problems that forensic anthropologists encounter, such as bones scattered over a wide area, false clues planted by killers, bones chewed by animals and inept procedures by local officials unfamiliar with advanced scientific techniques. True-crime addicts won't want to miss the book. Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ubelaker, a forensic anthropologist with the Smithsonian Institution, has aided the FBI for years. Here he shows how traditional methods of physical anthropology and state-of-the-art chemical and computer analysis of victims' remains, no matter how worn or disarticulated, can be used to paint portraits of both the deceased and the circumstances of their deaths with an accuracy that should

be discouraging to anyone with murderous intent. Ubelaker offers brief accounts of many cases and does not hold the reader's attention quite as well as Christopher Joyce and Eric Stover's *Witnesses from the Grave* ( LJ 12/90), which focuses on fewer cases in more detail. Still, this is good reading for amateur sleuths among large public library patrons or undergraduate populations.- Jim Burns, Ottumwa, Ia.Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is A fantastic book. It is very interesting and you always want to read more. I have learnt a lot about forensic anthropology from this book and what you do as an anthropologist. It is very interesting and is easy to read. I prefer to have technical language like scapula (shoulder blade) and that is in this book. But for those who dont understand that stuff there is a glossary. In conclusion, i loved this book and it was one of the best books i have ever read!!!

I read fictional books about dead body mysteries often, but this fascinating book is about real people, real bones and real mysteries of who, how and when people died.

This is a fantastic read. I had to read it for a class and enjoyed it very much. This is not a reference book, but rather a book geared toward the "armchair" forensic anthropologist. Ubelaker does a great job at incorporating his personal experiences with forensic method in a way that is not disturbing or as graphic as it could be. Anyone who has seen any of the television shows where forensics is used would probably enjoy this book.

this is a fascinating collection of 'real life' bones forensics and the tone of the scientist keeps it just enough clinical to distract from the gruesome messy details and violence the crimes he describes and human enough to find the cases interesting. It's a page turner in the best sense of the tv crime dramas and 'case' series. recommended by clerk at the Smithsonian, who turned out to be absolutely right--the best book of its kind.

Really well written to keep my interest.

Arrived undamaged and I love the topic in general and this book specifically!

Although the authors are clearly very well versed in forensic anthropology, I was disappointed in the

way they presented their material. The chapters weren't difficult to follow, but they read like memoirs of the authors' cases and I got the sense the authors were more interested in showing off than sharing knowledge with nonscientists. That made it tricky to isolate details, and frankly I've learned more from general crime scene books that devoted just one chapter to forensic anthropology. Bottom line: If you're looking for a solid reference book that you can turn to again and again, you'll probably find satisfaction only in the glossary at the end.

**Bones** This entertaining and educational book is by Douglas Ubelaker, a Smithsonian curator who helps to solve crimes as an FBI consultant, and uses this same science to uncover ancient secrets. A forensic expert's testimony can mean the difference between a conviction and a miscarriage of justice. Hunters and gatherers of crops have long been important for discovering lost bodies. Connecting found bones to a missing person does not always lead to a suspect. The rules of evidence in court require a witness to speak from his observations, not from other's reports. Archeology is closely related to forensic anthropology. Human skeletal identification was used during the Korean hostilities. Forensic anthropology can enable the bones to speak in police investigations! The analysis of modern violence can explain what happened centuries ago. Large samples of skeletons can be used to determine the frequencies of various diseases. The 33,000 skeletons in the National Museum of Natural History provide a standard of comparison. Statistics promote objectivity. As a young student Ubelaker wrote a term paper on the femur. You could determine that it was human, the height, estimate the sex, age at death, ethnic origin, body weight, patterns of locomotion, clues to certain diseases, indications of occupation, and sometimes how he died (p.45). About 10% of those executed for murder were subsequently proven innocent (p.63)! The low number of reported poisonings suggest that medical examiners should be more vigilant in identifying murder victims (p.62). An "accidental overdose" could be murder. Far more crimes are committed with paper and a pen (p.74). Chapter 6 tells about distinguishing human from animal bones. Chapter 7 tells of determining sex, size, race, and age at death. Chapter 8 tells that much may be learned from the environment where a body was found. Time since death can be estimated from the type of insects feeding on the corpse (p.108). Tooth marks on bones can hide or destroy evidence, or create false clues. Insects, larvae, and mollusks can create signs of pathology. Issuing more hunting licenses can result in more found remains (p.120). Chapter 10 explains how "dreams" can help solve crimes. Chapter 11 says attempts to hide a murder by burning attracts attention to the crime, even if they destroy some evidence. Chapter 13 tells what can be learned from larvae in a body. Chapter 14 says sketches based on skulls are not too accurate, but work because they are

close enough to get a response from someone 9p.169). The interpretation of evidence can be highly subjective, as when expert witnesses disagree (p.195). Do professional witnesses shape their testimony to please their clients (p.196)? Chapter 16 shows Ubelaker misquoting that Borden jingle (p.208). Does the "alleged murder weapon" have a chain of custody? Page 221 tells of a skull drilled by a .25 caliber Black & Decker! "Children who are loved grow faster than those who are not" (p.228). The big challenge is to distinguish between evidence of foul play from other environmental changes (p.298). If other people know of a murder, eventually they will tell (p.258). Chapter 21 explains why there are so few serial killers around. A lot of murders go unrecognized (p.263). Chapter 22 tells of murderers that almost got away with it. The murderer of a Swansea Mass girl was named as a suspect, confessed to at least six of his friends, but wasn't prosecuted until five years later. Chapter 24 tells of the need to keep a certain distance from cases to preserve objectivity, and any emotional drain.[Pagination is from the hardcover edition.]

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