



# The Burning Room

## Author Background

**Born:** 21 July 1956, Philadelphia PA, USA

**Raised:** Philadelphia (to age 12) and then Florida.

**Lives:** Florida, USA

Michael Connelly decided to become a writer after discovering the books of Raymond Chandler. Pursuing a major in journalism and a minor in creative writing, Connelly studied at the University of Florida.

After graduating in 1980, Connelly worked at newspapers in Daytona Beach and Fort Lauderdale, Florida, primarily specialising in the crime beat. In Fort Lauderdale he wrote about police and crime during the so-called “cocaine wars” which saw a wave of murder and violence. In 1986, he and two other reporters spent several months interviewing survivors of a major airline crash. They wrote a magazine story on the crash and the survivors which was later short-listed for the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing. Subsequently Connelly became a crime reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*.

After three years on the crime beat in L.A., Connelly began writing his first novel to feature LAPD Detective Hieronymus Bosch. The novel, *The Black Echo*, based in part on a true story, was published in 1992 and won the Edgar Award for Best First Novel by the Mystery Writers of America. Since then Connelly has gone on to write over 20 books in the Harry Bosch series, together with a dozen other novels (including six in the Mickey Haller series). In 2004 Connelly published a true crime book - *Crime Beat* - based on the stories he reported on as a journalist.

Sixty million copies of Connelly’s books have sold worldwide and his books have been translated into 39 languages. Connelly has won the Edgar Award, Anthony Award, Macavity Award, Los Angeles Times Best Mystery/Thriller Award, Shamus Award, Dilys Award, Nero Award, Barry Award, Audie Award, Ridley Award, Maltese Falcon Award (Japan), .38 Caliber Award (France), Grand Prix Award (France), Premio Bancarella Award (Italy), and the Pepe Carvalho award (Spain). In 2003 and 2004, Connelly was the President of the Mystery Writers of America organisation.

In addition to his literary work, Connelly is one of the producers and writers of the TV show, *Bosch* based on his novels. Connelly was also one of the creators, writers, and consulting producers of *Level 9*, a TV show about a taskforce fighting cyber crime. Connelly can sometimes be seen on the TV show *Castle* playing poker!

Source: Author’s official website and *Fantastic Fiction* website.



# The Burning Room

## Book Summary

*The Burning Room* is number 19 in the best-selling *Harry Bosch* series. In the first book of the series LAPD Detective Hieronymus (aka Harry) Bosch was in his early forties, in *The Burning Room* Bosch is in his mid-sixties and nearing retirement.

In the LAPD's Open-Unsolved Unit, not many murder victims die a decade after the crime. So when a man succumbs to complications from being shot by a stray bullet ten years earlier, Bosch catches a case in which the body is still fresh, but any other clues are virtually non-existent. Even a veteran cop would find this one tough going, but Bosch's new partner, Detective Lucia Soto, has no homicide experience. A young star in the department, Soto has been assigned to Bosch so that he can pass on to her his hard-won expertise.

Now Bosch and Soto are given the task of solving a murder that turns out to be highly charged and politically sensitive. Beginning with the bullet that has been lodged for years in the victim's spine, they must pull new leads from old evidence, and these leads soon reveal that the shooting was not random.

As the cold case investigation picks up speed, it leads to another unsolved case with even greater stakes: the deaths of several children in a fire that occurred 20 years ago. But when their work starts to threaten careers and lives, Bosch and Soto must decide whether it is worth risking everything to find the truth, or if it's safer to let some secrets stay buried.

Source: Author's official website. *Los Angeles Times* and *Fantastic Fiction* website.



# The Burning Room

## Discussion Questions

1. *The Burning Room* is the 19th novel in the Harry Bosch series. Do you like reading series with a mix of familiar and new characters? Have you read any of the Harry Bosch series before?
2. How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to "get into it"?
3. What did you think about the dynamic between Harry Bosch and his young colleague Lucia Soto?
4. Did you find the plot engaging or predictable? What did you make of the ending?
5. Michael Connelly's hero Raymond Chandler once wrote:  
*"A thriller writer in England, if he is good enough, is just as good as anyone else. There is none of that snobbism which makes a fourth-rate serious novelist, without style or any real talent, superior to a mystery writer.... I don't think somehow we shall ever reach that status in America.... I'm afraid our instinct for classification is too strong."\*\**  
 What do you think about the current status of crime writers and in particular *literary* crime writers in comparison to other novelists? (Consider for example how rarely a crime writer wins a literary award—is this an example of book snobbery?)
6. Connelly has a background in journalism as a crime reporter. What did you think of his writing style?
7. Connelly has said:  
*"[As] a writer, I am fascinated with the cop's bargain. That is that people take this job on knowing that it is very difficult to do right and fairly and objectively. And the hardest trick of all is surviving it without your insides wilting, let alone dealing with the outside pressures and dangers. To me that's a noble cause and I'd much rather examine that than examine why some evil person has acted out against the rules of society."\*\**  
 As a reader, whose actions and motivations do you prefer to read about—the good guys or the bad guys, the heroes or the villains?
8. *Just for fun:* Imagine you are a ghost writer, brought in to assist Connelly with the next book in the Harry Bosch series. What happens next? How would you plot the next book in the series? What would you do to make the series both fresh and familiar to fans?  
*Note: numbers 20 and 21 in the series have already been published (as of 2016), but just pretend for a moment that it is your task to plot number 20.*

Some questions sourced from the *LitLovers* website; some based on information from the publisher.

\* Private correspondence quoted in *Raymond Chandler speaking* (1997)

\*\* Interview on publisher website: Allen & Unwin



# The Burning Room

## Reviews

Michael Connelly's Harry Bosch series has its highs and lows, but the latest instalment is perched on a hilltop. *The Burning Room* is the best Bosch book in years, not only because of its sharp dialogue and fast-paced detective wizardry, but also because it neither dawdles nor lets Harry get moody.

Among the things that Harry, the Los Angeles Police Department's ace antihero, hasn't time for here: moping about his exes, worrying about his daughter, broodily listening to jazz in the wee hours or fretting about the threat of retirement, which has hovered over him for quite a while now. *The Burning Room* finds Harry in his highest gear, making every minute of police work count. And it gives him just the kind of crazily convoluted case that fans of detective fiction love. .... Mr. Connelly's credentials for creating elaborate, original crime scenarios have evolved gracefully. When he introduced Harry in *The Black Echo* (1992), he had a background as a one-time crime beat reporter and a familiarity with police lingo and tactics of that time. Since then, he has closely followed advances in forensics and technology and kept up with changes in both journalism and law enforcement.

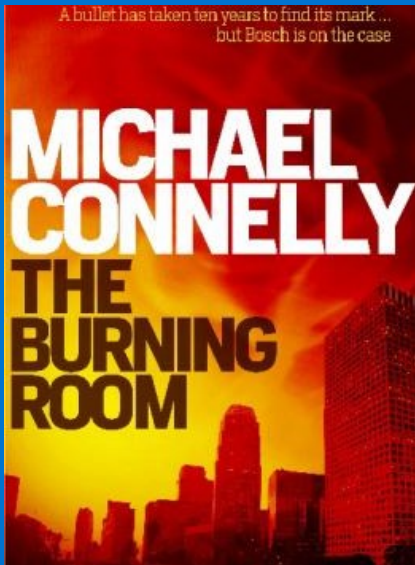
Janet Maslin  
*New York Times*

As always, Connelly pulls off a fast-paced, well-drawn police procedural, and it's a pleasure to watch Bosch and Soto track down guns and interview witnesses, their footwork minutely documented and easy and fun to follow. .... Connelly has favourite tropes that make some revelations predictable ("the dark waters where politics and murder swirl"), but the book is consistently entertaining. ....

One wonders what this old guard detective would make of recent clashes between police and civilians. Bosch, in his unrelenting pursuit of truth and justice, employs sneaky methods to keep suspects and witnesses a neat distance from their rights and their lawyers. In the current climate of rampant police misconduct, some of these actions stand out as Machiavellian, perhaps unintentionally so. But Connelly isn't writing for the hashtag activist crowd, and *The Burning Room* will more than satisfy his fans. The writing is simple and effective, and the story is interesting and original — impressive for the 19th in any series.

Steph Cha  
*Los Angeles Times*

# The Burning Room



## Reviews (continued)

[A] slice of classy, clever, page-turning stuff, as Bosch and his excellent new sidekick trace the shadows of years-old crimes whose tendrils stretch through the echelons of LA society and across the sprawl of its geography. The detective is described as a silverback by his boss – “the one that knows the most in the troop. Has all the experience.” Connelly, too, is a pair of eminently safe hands, and *The Burning Room* is a pleasure to read.

Alison Flood

*The Guardian*

Michael Connelly's novel is a little slow at first, but when the various plots and subplots begin to coalesce about midway through, it becomes a doozy of a tale. .... Perhaps the light at the end of this particularly gloomy adventure derives not so much from arriving at the solution to the murder as from the existence of not one, but two possible female successors when Harry leaves the force for good. The first and most obvious is Lucy.... The other candidate is Harry's daughter, Maddie, who is enrolled in an extracurricular Police Explorer program at her high school and already knows her way around a shooting range. Could we be seeing the stirrings of a hard-boiled trend here in which tough-guy detectives pass the torch to their daughters? Even before Henning Mankell's Kurt Wallander faded away, his daughter Linda joined the Swedish police force, and perhaps a few years from now, we'll be reading about the adventures of Maddie Bosch. As long as Harry always remains patrolling on the margins of this series, its greatness is secure.

Maureen Corrigan

*The Washington Post*

With his usual deftness, Connelly links the Merced shooting to an act of arson — an apartment fire that killed nine on the same day—and returns to his perennial themes: local politics, the media, the LAPD's internecine warfare, and, of course, Los Angeles itself, from the wealthy enclaves of Mulholland Drive to the barrios of East L.A. Bosch is very much of the old school in this high-tech world, but his hands-on tenacity serves him and the case well—just as Connelly serves his readers well with his encyclopedic knowledge and gifts as a storyteller.

*Publishers Weekly*