



## The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison

By John Emsley

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

### **The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison** By John Emsley

Was Napoleon killed by the arsenic in his wallpaper? How did Rasputin survive cyanide poisoning? Which chemicals in our environment pose the biggest threat to our health today?

In *The Elements of Murder*, John Emsley offers a fascinating account of five of the most toxic elements--arsenic, antimony, lead, mercury, and thallium--describing their lethal chemical properties and highlighting their use in some of the most famous murder cases in history. Indeed, we meet in this book a who's who of heartless murderers. Mary Ann Cotton, who used arsenic to murder her mother, three husbands, a lover, eight of her own children, and seven step children, a grand total of 20 people. Michael Swango, who may have killed as many as 60 of his patients and several of his colleagues during the 20 years he practiced as a doctor and paramedic. And even Saddam Hussein, who used thallium sulfate to poison his political rivals. Emsley also shows which toxic elements may have been behind the madness of King George III (almost certainly a case of acute lead poisoning), the delusions of Isaac Newton, and the strange death of King Charles II. In addition, the book examines many modern day environmental catastrophes, including accidental mass poisoning from lead and arsenic, and the Minamata Bay disaster in Japan.

Written by a leading science writer, famous for his knowledge of the elements and their curious and colorful histories, *The Elements of Murder* offers an enticing combination of true crime tales and curious science that adds up to an addictive read.

 [Download The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison ...pdf](#)

# The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison

By John Emsley

## The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison By John Emsley

Was Napoleon killed by the arsenic in his wallpaper? How did Rasputin survive cyanide poisoning? Which chemicals in our environment pose the biggest threat to our health today?

In *The Elements of Murder*, John Emsley offers a fascinating account of five of the most toxic elements--arsenic, antimony, lead, mercury, and thallium--describing their lethal chemical properties and highlighting their use in some of the most famous murder cases in history. Indeed, we meet in this book a who's who of heartless murderers. Mary Ann Cotton, who used arsenic to murder her mother, three husbands, a lover, eight of her own children, and seven step children, a grand total of 20 people. Michael Swango, who may have killed as many as 60 of his patients and several of his colleagues during the 20 years he practiced as a doctor and paramedic. And even Saddam Hussein, who used thallium sulfate to poison his political rivals. Emsley also shows which toxic elements may have been behind the madness of King George III (almost certainly a case of acute lead poisoning), the delusions of Isaac Newton, and the strange death of King Charles II. In addition, the book examines many modern day environmental catastrophes, including accidental mass poisoning from lead and arsenic, and the Minamata Bay disaster in Japan.

Written by a leading science writer, famous for his knowledge of the elements and their curious and colorful histories, *The Elements of Murder* offers an enticing combination of true crime tales and curious science that adds up to an addictive read.

## The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison By John Emsley Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #539236 in Books
- Published on: 2005-07-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.90" h x 1.70" w x 9.40" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 436 pages

 [Download The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison ...pdf](#)

## Download and Read Free Online The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison By John Emsley

---

### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Emsley (*Vanity, Vitality, and Virility: The Science Behind the Products You Love to Buy*) hits a bull's eye in this fascinating, wonderfully readable forensic history of five deadly chemicals (mercury, arsenic, antimony, lead and thallium) and their starring role in that most intoxicating drama of pure evil: murder. A deeply knowledgeable chemist (he's science writer in residence at Cambridge University) with a gift for making accessible the dry and bewilderingly arcane, Emsley's at his best in case studies of infamous poisoners and their victims. During the reign of James I of England, for instance, the poet Thomas Overbury, having fallen out of royal favor, was administered three fatal doses of mercury, only to survive. For his stubbornness he was administered a fourth dose—by enema—and finally succumbed. Mary Bateman, the "Yorkshire Witch," was equally unlucky. Convicted in 1809 of poisoning a client, Mary was hanged and her corpse skinned so pieces could be sold as charms. Not all the incidents are in the past: Emsley also discusses contemporary environmental poisoning from mercury and Saddam Hussein's use of thallium sulfate on his enemies. Fanatical devotees of the macabre might thumb past sections devoted to less sensational history. But the general reader will not be disappointed: each of these deadly toxins was at one time or another promoted for its unique health or beauty benefits. 15 b&w illus. (June)

Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

Readers seduced by this book's provocative title into expecting a spicy catalog of murder and mayhem may be a bit disappointed by its somewhat dry and technical tone. The author, a veteran science writer, certainly knows his stuff, but he may have slightly overestimated his audience's tolerance for discussions of chemical formulas. Still, for the patient reader, there is a wealth of intriguing information here. Emsley traces the evolution of alchemy and explains the central role that the quest to turn metal into gold plays in the history of poison, pausing along the way to note that Isaac Newton's obsession with alchemy may have contributed to his madness. Later chapters discuss the history, uses, and murderous abuses of mercury, arsenic, antimony, lead, and thallium. Yes, it's technical, but just keep plodding: it's not all formulas. Emsley retells enough juicy and lurid (and sometimes famous) stories of murder by poison to enthrall both true-crime fans and budding mystery writers. *David Pitt*

Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Review

"A delightful potion of chemical erudition, forgotten science history and ghastly murder schemes.... Reading *The Elements of Murder* is like watching a hundred episodes of *CSI*, but without having to sit through the tedious personal relationships of the characters.... Along the way the bodies pile up as Emsley relates spectacular case histories of poisonings, accidental and criminal.... Emsley mines what he calls 'the darker side of the periodic table' with consummate skill."--Dick Teresi, *The New York Times Book Review*

"A fascinating anecdotal history of killing by five elements--mercury, arsenic, antimony, lead and thallium.... With something of interest on almost every page, it combines the satisfactions of a detective story, intriguing snippets of history, popular science, unsolved mysteries and murder. A powerful brew." --P. D. James, *Sunday Telegraph*

"Emsley captures the creepy common ground of science and homicide.... Beyond the scandals and celebrities, what makes 'The Elements of Murder' such a charming read is the absurdity of its anecdotes.... Hitchcock could make many films from this book."--Brenn Jones, *San Francisco Chronicle*

"Fascinating, wide-ranging and, let's not mince words, macabre new history of poison.... A truly guilty pleasure."--*Wall Street Journal*

"The list of the famous who may have been poisoned by one of these devious toxins is a long one, from Pope Clement II to Mozart. Emsley has dug up the dirt on these and a rogue's gallery of lesser-known cases.... If the golden age of poisoning is gone (replaced, to be sure, by other forms of mayhem), in Emsley's book it's still very much alive."--Laurence A. Marschall, *Natural History*

"Emsley retells enough juicy and lurid (and sometimes famous) stories of murder by poison to enthrall both true-crime fans and budding mystery writers.... The author certainly knows his stuff."--*Booklist*

"Emsley hits a bull's eye in this fascinating, wonderfully readable forensic history of five deadly chemicals (mercury, arsenic, antimony, lead and thallium) and their starring role in that most intoxicating drama of pure evil: murder. A deeply knowledgeable chemist with a gift for making accessible the dry and bewilderingly arcane, Emsley's at his best in case studies of infamous poisoners and their victims."--*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

"I heartily recommend that this book be read and added to the library of every chemist, toxicologist, and avid crime fiction reader, wherever they may be around the world. This book is an absolute delight and, for the price, a bargain to boot."--*Chemical and Engineering News*

"Both as a natural history of poisons and as a near-encyclopedic who-used-what-how reference, the book fascinates. The glossary and bibliography are most helpful. So dangerous is the world that many readers will choose to stay home, working on that special sauce for mother-in-laws meat loaf."--*Foreword Magazine*

"This absorbing volume is equal parts chemistry, history and mystery, but you don't need to be a scientist, historian or murderer to appreciate all three facets."--*BookPage* (Beach Reading Selection)

## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

**Bruce Bracey:**

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important action, like looking for your favorite e-book and reading a e-book. Beside you can solve your problem; you can add your knowledge by the reserve entitled The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison. Try to make the book The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison as your friend. It means that it can to become your friend when you experience alone and beside that course make you smarter than before. Yeah, it is very fortuned in your case. The book makes you much more confidence because you can know anything by the book. So , let us make new experience and knowledge with this book.

**Kathy Vaughn:**

What do you regarding book? It is not important together with you? Or just adding material when you really need something to explain what the one you have problem? How about your time? Or are you busy individual? If you don't have spare time to try and do others business, it is make you feel bored faster. And you have spare time? What did you do? Everybody has many questions above. The doctor has to answer that question because just their can do that. It said that about e-book. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is appropriate. Because start from on pre-school until university need this kind of The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison to read.

**Jerome Chisolm:**

This book untitled The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison to be one of several books in which best seller in this year, this is because when you read this guide you can get a lot of benefit on it. You will easily to buy this particular book in the book retail outlet or you can order it by means of online. The publisher with this book sells the e-book too. It makes you easier to read this book, because you can read this book in your Touch screen phone. So there is no reason for you to past this guide from your list.

**Gene Conley:**

The book untitled The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison contain a lot of information on the item. The writer explains her idea with easy technique. The language is very clear to see all the people, so do not worry, you can easy to read it. The book was authored by famous author. The author gives you in the new period of time of literary works. You can actually read this book because you can keep reading your smart phone, or program, so you can read the book within anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can available their official web-site and also order it. Have a nice study.

**Download and Read Online The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison By John Emsley #NYBHV81A25P**

# **Read The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison By John Emsley for online ebook**

The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison By John Emsley Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison By John Emsley books to read online.

## **Online The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison By John Emsley ebook PDF download**

**The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison By John Emsley Doc**

**The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison By John Emsley MobiPocket**

**The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison By John Emsley EPub**

**NYBHV81A25P: The Elements of Murder: A History of Poison By John Emsley**