Christmas Bells

By Jennifer Chiaverini

Reviewed by

Connie Bennett

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Historical Fiction/

Biography

Although this book claims to be a work of fiction, it has so many references to the very thoughts and attitudes of world-famous writer and poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, that I would personally consider it more of a biography. The author has intertwined actual events, all meticulously researched through use of diaries, journals, newspapers and personal correspondence, with a modern-day set of realistic characters, forming an unforgettable story of love and loss, patriotism and duty, supplication and thanksgiving to an almighty God.

 Longfellow's story is told in a series of Christmas vignettes, and in each one, there is a note of similarity to the various Christmases of the characters in the contemporary story. The stories, though occurring 150 years apart, take place in Boston; both contain college experiences, a love for song and poetry, several examples of unrequited love, and the pealing bells of St. Margaret's Catholic Church. Throughout the book, the thread of the poem-turned-Christmas Carol, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day", weaves its sparkling way. I could go on and on about this book, about Longfellow himself, and about the creative genius of Jennifer Chiaverini, but I believe I'll leave you with a few final words of praise, in the hope that you will seek out this book for yourself and enjoy it as much as I did. You'll feel as if you personally know all of these richly described people as you take part in their intertwined lives. You won't be disappointed! An entire handful of gold stars for this book!

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