

## 18 tiny deaths: the untold story of Frances Glessner Lee and the invention of modern forensics Bruce Goldfarb.

**About the Book:** Frances Glessner Lee, born a socialite to a wealthy and influential Chicago family in the 1870s, was never meant to have a career, let alone one steeped in death and depravity. Yet she developed a fascination with the investigation of violent crimes and made it her life's work. Best known for creating the Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death, a series of dioramas that appear charming-until you notice the macabre little details: an overturned chair, a blood-spattered comforter. Lee developed a system that used the Nutshells dioramas to train law enforcement officers to investigate violent crimes, and her methods are still used today.

**About the Author:** A former EMT/paramedic and a nursing school dropout, he has written for national and local newspapers, magazines, and web publications. He also wrote and edited several medical texts and reference books. He is the author of *18 Tiny Deaths: The Untold Story of the Woman Who Invented Modern Forensics* and served from 2012 to 2022 as the executive assistant to the chief of OCME Maryland. He lives in Baltimore.

### People To Know:

Frances Glessner Lee

John Jacob Glessner

Sarah Frances Macbeth Glessner

John George Macbeth Glessner

George Burgess Magrath (MD)

Isaac Scott

James Bryant Conant

C. Sidney Burwell (MD)

Alan R. Moritz (MD)

Richard Ford (MD)

Roger Lee (MD)

Alan Gregg (MD)

Erle Stanley Gardner

### Questions:

What have you learned after reading this book? Has it broadened your perspective about a difficult issue—personal or societal?

What did you like best about this book? What did you like least about this book? What questions do you still have?

What else have you read on this topic, and would you recommend these books to others?

What were your initial thoughts about Frances Glessner Lee before and after reading the book?

Did anything about her life or work surprise you? Why?

How did the book change or reinforce your understanding of the history of forensic science?

What role did gender play in Lee's career, and how do you think she navigated the challenges she faced as a woman in a male-dominated field?

How does the title "18 Tiny Deaths" reflect the larger themes of the book?

What does the book suggest about the intersection of science, justice, and gender in early 20th-century America?

How did Bruce Goldfarb portray Frances Glessner Lee—as a scientist, an artist, or a pioneer?

Do you think the author remained objective in his portrayal of Lee, or did he seem to admire her too much—or not enough?

Were there any moments where you disagreed with the author's interpretations or presentation of events?

Would Frances Glessner Lee be received differently today? In what ways?

Did the book inspire you to learn more about forensic science or true crime?

Would you recommend this book to someone not already interested in crime or history? Why or why not?

Was there a particular chapter or detail that stayed with you?

**Read Alikes:**

Forensics: what bugs, burns, prints, DNA and more tell us about crime by Val McDermid

American Sherlock: murder, forensics, and the birth of American CSI by Kate Dawson

Blood, sweat, and fear: the story of Inspector Vance, a pioneer forensic investigator by Eve Lazarus