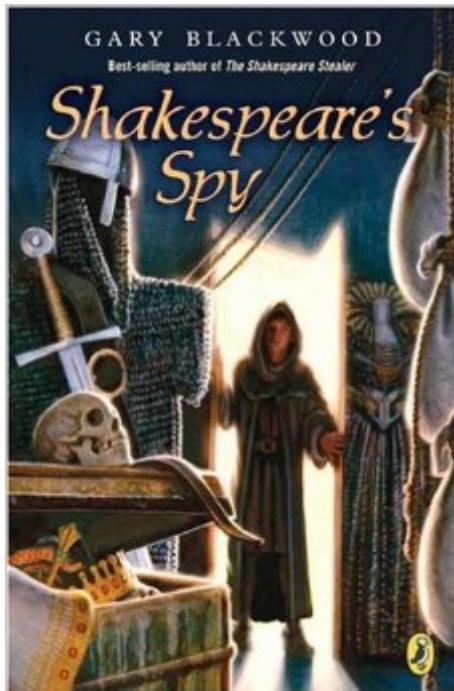


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Shakespeare's Spy (Shakespeare Stealer, Book 3)



Synopsis

Things are disappearing mysteriously from Will Shakespeare's acting company, and it looks like an inside job. Everyone's eyes are on Widge, the orphan boy turned actor, and former thief. Widge knows better than anyone that Shakespeare's plays must be protected at all costs. In order to prove his innocence and clear his name, Widge must learn a new role: spy. But can he dig through the suspects and skulduggery and catch the true culprit?

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0850 (What's this?)

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Puffin Books; Reprint edition (April 21, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0142403113

ISBN-13: 978-0142403112

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.7 x 7.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #563,475 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #37 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Renaissance #432 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Europe #4314 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Mysteries & Detectives

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Shakespeare's Spy is the third (and apparently the last) book in Blackwood's Shakespeare Stealer series. I would like to think that there might be more books in the future, as I have enjoyed this series quite a bit, but the events in this book have a coming-of-age feel to them as we see Widge having to confront the challenges of love and death, not to mention having to find a way to aid an old friend and to find out who's been spying on Master Shakespeare's troupe at the same time. As always, Blackwood does an excellent job of working in details about life in Shakespeare's London and about life in the world of Elizabethan theater. And as he did in Shakespeare's Scribe, Blackwood here goes into even more detail about what goes into the writing of a play as Widge tries his hand at writing a play of his own. Using this, Blackwood also cleverly shows the reader at the

same time how it is possible that not all the plays we think of as being Shakespeare's were necessarily his work. One of the things I like about Blackwood's books is that you learn things about the actual historical period in the process of an enjoyable read. The actual history in this case adds to the drama as Widge and his fellow players must deal with the impending death of Queen Elizabeth, under whose reign the theater prospered. They must wait anxiously to see whether her successor, James, will be a patron of the theater or, if the Puritans have their way, will have it banned as a sinful indulgence, putting an end to all theatrical performances and to their way of life. Another thing I particularly liked about Shakespeare's Spy is Blackwood's use of a fortune teller who early on foretells what fate has in store for Widge, his friend Sam and his rival Sal Pavay.

A little baffled by this last book. Not sure completely how I feel about it for an ending. Things aren't all wrapped up nicely with a bow on it, but I think that's okay. I feel like for every good thing that happened to Widge something really bad was around the corner to knock him back down. Especially after the first book. Feels like the bad might outweigh the good overall for him. At least, when it comes to his relationships with other people. I'm still not over how fast a character's death went in the second book. The deaths in this third book didn't affect me as much. There are a lot of little twist in a very short time period at the end. I felt like a little too much had to be stuffed in this story. The bulk of the spying, which you see in the title happens in the last quarter of the book. That was odd to me. I liked the preoccupation with the possibility of the Queen's death and how people didn't know what would happen when she did pass on. It was a big deal around the time so it made a lot of sense to focus on it. Also the issues of religion in the story, which happened to do with the queen's nearing death as well in some ways. Also liked the bits of the story that dealt with Julia in the end. I feel like you had to have Julia at least make an appearance in the finale of the series. I feel like she and Sander are really important characters to Widge in the series. The whole thing about fate and challenging it or if you can change things was too cliche for me. I did like that it lead to some growth for Widge with him finally recognizing that he isn't the same boy that was found at an orphanage and forced to steal a play from Shakespeare.

It was a month ago that I read "The Shakespeare Stealer" and found myself absorbed in the world of Elizabethan theatre and the life of the plucky orphan Widge. I couldn't wait to get my hands on the next two books in the series. "Shakespeare's Spy" is the final chapter of Widge's adventures. In this novel, a series of thefts and the attention of anti-Catholic authorities bring it to the attention of the Lord Chamberlain's Men that there is a traitor in their midst. As the players speculate amongst

themselves as to which of them it might be, Widge is preoccupied with a new project: writing a play, in the hopes that he can impress Shakespeare's beautiful daughter, Judith. This wasn't my favorite book of the trilogy; it seemed a little more contrived than the others, a little less natural, a little more reliant on standard fiction "devices." However, this minor flaw hardly disqualifies the novel from a place with its predecessors among the ranks of excellent juvenile historical fiction. The same candor, wit, and tenderness that made the first two novels such a delight are intact in this sequel, and once again, Gary Blackwood offers just enough clues to enable the attentive reader to uncover most of the novel's secrets. His audacious treatment of real historical figures, depicting them as flesh-and-blood creatures as splendidly imagined as the wholly fictitious characters, rather than untouchable relics, is on display here more than ever. Blackwood feels thoroughly at home in Widge's world, and it shows. A fortune-teller who makes several brief appearances offers an offbeat sort of foreshadowing, as her predictions do all come true by the novel's end, but not in the way either the characters or the reader would ever have expected.

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