



Murder Most Unladylike: A Wells & Wong Mystery

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1934. When Daisy Wells and Hazel Wong set up a secret detective agency at Deepdean School for Girls, they struggle to find a truly exciting mystery to investigate. (Unless you count the case of Lavinia's missing tie. Which they don't.)

But then Hazel discovers the body of the Science Mistress, Miss Bell - but when she and Daisy return five minutes later, the body has disappeared. Now the girls have to solve a murder, and prove a murder has happened in the first place before the killer strikes again (and before the police can get there first, naturally),

But will they succeed?

And can their friendship stand the test?

Murder Most Unladylike: A Wells & Wong Mystery Details

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From Reader Review Murder Most Unladylike: A Wells & Wong Mystery for online ebook

K. says

I really wanted to like this book, solely because at least half the year 5 and 6 kids at school are OBSESSED with this series, and the past few middle grade books that I've read have been fabulous. Unfortunately, this one fell a little flat for me.

Pros

- Historical fiction with an Asian protagonist.
- It's a middle grade crime series. I mean, how often do you get that?!
- Lots of insinuation that two female teachers were in a relationship
- Also reference to older girls using supply closets to make out

Cons

- It's very jolly hockey sticks. Like, VERY jolly hockey sticks. It feels like The Twins at St Clare's with a side of murder
- While I liked Hazel as a character, Daisy drove me absolutely nuts. She's sooooo perfect, what with her blonde hair and blue eyes and being insanely smart and all the teachers loving her but hiding how smart she is so that she's still the most popular girl in school and uuuuuuugh. Add in the fact that she basically drags Hazel around after her no matter what Hazel says she wants to do ("Here, Hazel, drink half this bottle of ipecac so that we get sent to sick bay overnight and can sneak out and look for clues in between bouts of puking!"), and I pretty much wanted to punch her
- Everyone conveniently ignores the fact that Hazel is Asian, and she goes to great pains to not remind them of that (her mother sends boxes of her absolute favourite snack, and she hides them in her trunk so that no one else can see her icky Asian food)
- I just didn't give a shit about the case and whether or not they worked out whodunnit

So yeah. I wanted to love it, I really did. And yet, it came out somewhere middle of the road for me.

Pamela says

Fun Fun Fun!!!

Mystery Marvelous! Whodunit Wonderful! Young Adult Awesomeness!

Robin Stevens has knocked it out of the park, as we Americans say. If the entire series is as good as this first installment, sign me up! I'll read them all. And you should too.....if you dare to be young at heart.

The series is set in England during the nineteen-thirties, and features two young boarding school ladies, Wells and Wong, a sort of youthful female Holmes and Watson. They are a scream! I mean that in the best of ways. Wong, who narrates, is a black haired dark eyed Chinese who is a bit shy and reserved, highly intelligent, trying her best to fit into bonny old England. And she can be quite funny! Wells, is an English, blue-eyed blonde who is equally intelligent, though often rash and brazen in actions. Sometimes leaping before thinking. As a duo, these two thirteen-year olds are sleuthing wonder women.

When Wong stumbles upon a teacher (Miss Bell) dead on the gym floor, they're on the case. But where to start? Within a matter of minutes, the body goes missing. Henceforth, nobody believes Miss Bell is dead, let alone murdered. And from there, the plot only thickens. Broken windows. Secret passages. Weird and nefarious things are afoot. A murderer is at large - and closing in.

FIVE ***** Mystery Marvelous, Whodunit Wonderful, Young Adult Awesomeness ***** STARS

Alice, as in Wonderland says

My issue with this book starts and ends with Daisy. As a very obvious Sherlock Holmes fan, I'm going to take a gander and guess that the author really enjoys Sherlock and not Elementary, because Elementary is a show about a steadfast partnership that might not have gotten off on the most perfect of starts but evolves into a friendship that is as equal and understanding of each other's faults and assets. I can tell that this author watches Sherlock because Daisy is Sherlock. Right down from her absolute arrogance, and her lack of mind for consequences - largely because she clearly grew up in an environment thoroughly lacking them, which is supposed to, I guess, make me feel sympathy for her, except that it merely makes me feel like she's an upper class privileged little miss. She's smart but she pretends to be not. She's rich, impulsive, that magical perfectly gifted level of intelligent that all Holmes and Holmes-archetypes these days now suffer, and never suffers emotional consequences of her actions and feels little to remorse manipulating and constantly abusing someone she apparently calls a friend, and uses her quite often merely as an errand girl, and gets away with it because Hazel is so starry-eyed for Daisy, whether she is angry at her or not, that she is unable to resist. God, it is quite literally as though the show Sherlock was imposed on this book, it's awful. It's such a horrible representation of a friendship that is damaging, but it's okay because hey, she apologizes once, right? The second half of this book is only bearable because of it, and even then Daisy exhibits clear privilege and dominance over Hazel.

The argument between the two of them in the book infuriated me, because again, the friendship feels entirely not like a friendship, as opposed a partial worship of an immigrant who understood and understands the immediate status quo of her, an Asian in a European country, and what is literally a white, blonde, blue-eyed girl. It is heart breaking to me, an Asian girl, to see my childhood rather well illustrated, but with none of the emotional and mature growth of me eventually realizing that this couldn't stand, that to consider white people better than me in an inherent fashion because they get the stories and the films - I picked this book up because an Asian girl was in it. And the book immediately starts with Hazel more or less being subservient to Daisy, talking about how she's happy to be the Watson. Not the Watson of Elementary, or even of Doyle's Holmes, who, in his different way, is respected and revered by Holmes, to the point that Holmes admits that Watson's knowledge of his actual profession (medicine) is equal/exceeds his own. The whole book I was desperately hoping that it turns out that Hazel is right, and that they abolish "Secretary" and "President" entirely, but only some of that happens, and it's certainly not enough. I certainly don't bloody understand why Hazel feels the need to apologize, and the scene is presented as though it's two friends understanding the error of their ways when it's pretty clearly been Daisy. Daisy shuts Hazel down. Daisy continually dismisses Hazel's totally valid fear of BEING MURDERED. Daisy is in fact Hazel's bully, according to their first meeting - AND THIS HARDLY CHANGES.

Probably I am one of few people who view the relationship (and the whole general show) of Sherlock to be frustrating, and definitely not a depiction of people who actually are friends. But if you do, then I guess you'd like this book. I'd probably give this a berth if you're Asian as well, because god, we already deal with this in day to day life, why would you subject yourself to more of it here, where it actually doesn't reach a point

where you understand that white people are not inherently more interesting for their whiteness and just stays in a miserable status quo where having a basic modicum of decency leveled at you is the best you can ask for?

I'm going to go watch Elementary.

Wendy Darling says

We unveiled the U.S./Canadian cover for MURDER IS BAD MANNERS today at The Midnight Garden!

"Half of the magic of Harry Potter comes from Hogwarts, after all, and I lived the closest thing to Hogwarts there is."

~ Robin Stevens

The author tells us about how her own boarding school experience helped to shape this cozy murder mystery set in the 1930s, plus we have an early ARC giveaway!

Elevetha says

I can't complain, as far as just mystery goes. It was fascinating, because there was so much misdirection that I honestly completely neglected to notice the obvious clues as to whom was the murderer. Cleverly written, I'll say that.

However, I found Daisy and Hazel's friendship to be problematic. Daisy manipulates and pushes Hazel around, also placing herself as more important and belittling Hazel's place in their detective "agency", and Hazel is just so desperate to be friends with her that she allows Daisy to do all of this. Now that is not the problem. This is probably a very common real-world problem that needs to be addressed. And Daisy does come to recognize that she needs to treat Hazel better, assure her and confirm that she is an important part of their "agency", and even start being Hazel's *friend* rather than idol. All well and good, but what IS the problem I found here is that even though all this happens, it's done so poorly, I couldn't believe that Daisy really changed. Her character development as regarding her friendship with Hazel felt fake, flat, and forced because it was too quick, like flicking a switch.

And the other thing that really brought this down was the bi/lesbian teachers and schoolgirls literally everywhere. I mean, everywhere. And not only everywhere, but constantly mentioned. Like, no. A. This is a kid's book, and the fact that there was a bi/lesbian/straight love triangle is bad enough for an adult to be subjected to and B. I refuse to believe that apparently nearly all the members of this whole damn boarding school are lesbian. Not even mentioning the fact that IF they were, the book is set in the 1930's and, historically speaking, they would have tried harder to hide it, and IF it was discovered and mentioned, it wouldn't have been done nearly so favorably/blasely.

Anyways. I can't believe I remembered all that as well as I did. It's been a whole 3 months!!!

Margitte says

Well say hello to a combination of Nancy Drew, Veronica Mars and Blyton's boarding school books. Add to that a touch of Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot and you've got it made!

Only this time it is 1934. Thirteen-year-old girls Hazel Wong (from Hong Kong) and Daisy Wells (from the English upper classes) have formed their own secret club, the Wells and Wong Detective Society at the Deepdean School for Girls in England. They are quite successful in digging up secrets from everybody in school, with Daisy the number one snoop. She is the perfect English girl, highly popular, and knows everything about everyone and she's good at it.

Hazel Wong is her side-kick, initially the quiet, polite one, meticulously clean and precise in everything she did. Until she discovered the secret to melt into the mass of girls in the school. Sloppiness and less-clean appearances were expected. It was the secret of the rich girls in school. Never show wealth! Whatever you were, never strive to be the brightest girl in class either! Mediocrity is the name of the game. Fake it. Act. Be good at it. Hazel was not only extremely intelligent, she also turned out to be the second best pretender in school. Daisy was the best. And that is the reason why they became the best of friends.

Prestige, honor, and tradition draw the best of the best to the school. Teachers were strictly selected for positions at the school. It was just the perfect set-up. Life was perfect.

But then Miss Bell was no longer at the school. She resigned, was the official announcement. Hazel knew better. She found Miss Bell's body in the gym, went for help, and when she returned, the body was gone!

The Wells and Wong Detective Society had suddenly their work cut out for them and they had to act fast to prevent the murderer from getting away with it. But oh dear, for every murder there is a murderer, and more skeletons appear out of nowhere in the closets! What to do!?

COMMENTS: Hazel Wong is the young narrator of the tale and never ceases to keep up the lively, vivid energy of two thirteen-year-old girls. There's nothing childish about the story. The prose is funny, witty, innocent, wise. I constantly smiled and sniggered for the actions of these two ambitious girls and their dorm mates.

I loved this whodunit. The drama managed to keep me totally immersed in the atmosphere of the time, the labyrinth of suspects, the guessing of motives and the neverending suspense.

The other reason why I loved this book, is because I attended a similar girls school. I felt so at home in the halls and dorms of the age old buildings and its occupiers. I totally identified with the characters. It was a superb trip down memory lane. Even the church pipe organ in the hall of Deepdean School for Girls was familiar.

Overall I am of the opinion that this book is just as enjoyable for grown-ups as it is for teenage girls. Well-written, well-plotted and well-done.

The ARC was made available by Simon & Schuster through edelweiss.abovethetree.com for review. Thank you for the opportunity. What a delight!

Jennybeast says

Oh, I'm so torn! I liked this book. I liked the story and the characters -- yay for kid British sleuths, yay for a smart, Asian girl main character. But.

This is so very much an American's version of a British school -- the author is constantly going out of the way to explain words to us and then even includes a glossary at the end -- that is overkill, and it feels like a condescending voice in the middle of the story "educating" the audience, since we're too dumb to know what she's talking about. Kids are more sophisticated than that. If you use the terms in context, the kids will figure it out. If you want to include a glossary afterwards, that's great -- but you don't need both. And there are a lot of British boarding school books out there. This book? Is not inventing the genre, so does not need to explain all the words.

No British school system uses grades. They use the word Form and the numbering system is completely different from American schools. It's glaring, especially given how pedantic the writer is about using authentic terminology in other places. Either it's a British boarding school or it isn't. Make up your mind.

Hazel is great as a character, except for the self-hate thing. Despite the fact that she is a plucky, intelligent girl, she constantly describes herself as fat and unappealing and uses words that emphasize how bad she feels about herself, in contrast to her lovely, perfectly English friend of the beautiful blue eyes and blonde, blonde hair. Really? The stereotyping is over the top, Daisy is a bully, and at no point in the story is there any indication that Hazel is wrong to feel that way about herself.

I'm not sure if I'm annoyed or delighted with the frequent references to lesbianism -- on the whole, I think it's kind of cool that it is blatant in this story -- between teachers, between older girls, and in the pashes that girls have on one another -- but I think that may be part of why the book isn't reading as British to me -- all of those elements would be in a British version of this story, sure, but they would be more subtle, not openly acknowledged. Is this meant to be present-day? If so, then the open acceptance of homosexuality would be a lovely and refreshing thing. Since it doesn't seem like it, that doesn't really work.

That's the other hazy thing. When is this book meant to take place? Clearly the fashion is for cloche hats. They have automobiles, and women live independently. Dorothy Sayers and Agatha Christie are known writers. However, there is a huge stigma on out-of-wedlock children, and teachers can be dismissed for marrying, so I don't know. It's really unclear, and I think that leads to some of my confusion about all the rest of the things.

Aaaaand I see now that it's supposed to be 1934. Nope. I don't buy that even a little bit.

The plot is great, the characters are endearing. If someone would edit this book with an eye towards specificity, it might be worth recommending. And I'm sorry for being so harsh about it, but my disappointment is the keener for enjoying the book as much as I did.

Advanced Reader's Copy provided by Edelweiss.

Isabella says

Meine Meinung

Schon äußerlich ist „Murder Most Unladylike“ ein kleines Juwel. Der Roman hat ein zauberhaftes Cover und ist auch innen sehr liebevoll gestaltet. Vorne im Buch ist eine Karte des Deepdean-Internats eingezeichnet und hinten findet sich ein „handgeschriebener“ Glossar. Die eigentliche Story wird aus Hazels Perspektive geschildert, beim Glossar ist dagegen Daisy die Erzählerin, wobei ihr Charakter wunderbar durchscheint. Ich persönlich finde diese Lösung noch viel schöner als wenn der Glossar einfach lieblos an die Geschichte „drangeklatscht“ wird. Außerdem war es mal eine nette Abwechslung, MEHR Begriffe erklärt zu bekommen als nötig.

Der Schreibstil hat mir ebenfalls auf Anhieb gefallen. Ich-Erzählerin Hazel war mir allein durch ihre Erzählstimme sympathisch. Der Schreibstil spiegelt wunderbar ihre Persönlichkeit wieder und lässt ein Bild der Protagonistin vor dem inneren Auge entstehen. Auf seine ganz eigene, originelle Art ist dieser Reihenauftritt auch eine Hommage an die Sherlock Holmes-Romane. Dazu passt natürlich, dass wie bei den berühmten Vorbildern die „Assistentin“ erzählt und nicht „Chef-Detektivin“ Daisy.

Die Handlung ist im Jahr 1934 angesiedelt, der historische Hintergrund spielt hier aber kaum eine Rolle. Im Grund geht es mehr um das „Flair“ als um tatsächliche historische Ereignisse. Ich habe Internatsgeschichten schon immer geliebt, und auch dieses Mal hat mir das Setting sofort zugesagt. Teepausen mit Gebäck, Süßigkeiten-Verstecke, Tea-Rooms und geheime Gänge – was gibt es da noch mehr zu sagen als „Yes, please“? Vor diesem Hintergrund erzählt der Roman eine spannende Geschichte im Stil der klassischen englischen „cozy crimes“. Hier geht es um Spurensuche, um clevere Einfälle und das allmähliche Eingrenzen des Verdächtigen-Kreises. Wer Actionszenen mit Verfolgungsjagden und Schießereien erwartet, wird hier eher enttäuscht werden. Ich fand die Geschichte so jedenfalls genau richtig und war von der Auflösung sehr überrascht. Einen kleinen Tick dramatischer hätte das Finale aber schon sein dürfen.

Protagonistin Hazel war mir wie gesagt von Beginn an sympathisch. Als einzige Asiatin an der Schule hatte sie einen schweren Start in Deepdean. Und so paradisisch, wie sie es sich ausgemalt hatte, ist das Leben in der englischen Provinz dann doch nicht. Im Gegensatz zu Daisy ist Hazel eher der zurückhaltende, vorsichtige Typ. Sie blickt zu ihrer Freundin auf, sieht aber auch ganz deutlich deren Fehler. Ich habe ehrlich gesagt ein bisschen gebraucht, um mit Daisy wirklich warm zu werden. Auf mich wirkte sie zunächst recht arrogant und herablassend, ich habe meine Meinung im Laufe des Romans jedoch wieder geändert. Daisy ist zwar selbstbewusst und von ihren Fähigkeiten überzeugt, sieht es aber auch ein, wenn sie einen Fehler gemacht hat. Etwas mehr Bescheidenheit würde der Nachwuchsdetektivin gut tun, doch in jedem Fall hat sie das Herz am rechten Fleck.

Fazit

Ein wunderbar charmanter, spannender Krimi a la Nancy Drew! Ich freue mich schon darauf, weitere Bände der Reihe zu lesen.

Maddie says

This was just a whole book of fun. It had a murder mystery, of course, was set in a border school and had a

POC narrator! What more could you ask for? I loved the atmosphere and the 1930s setting (despite the what would now be considered politically incorrect terms used in regards to Hazel). I'd love to read the other books in the series, now that the characters have been established, and I'll definitely be scanning my local libraries for the sequel! What an excellent book to ring in the new year!

Aleshanee says

4.5 Sterne für einen spannenden Mordfall im historischen England!

Meine Meinung

Ich bin durch Zufall über diese Reihe gestolpert, da ich etwas in der Richtung gesucht habe. Mich hat ja schon die Flavia Reihe sehr begeistert und auch der Einzelband "Lasst uns schweigen wie ein Grab" - junge Mädels, die Mordfälle aufklären vor dem Schauplatz des historischen Englands - das klingt einfach toll und wird auch hier bezaubernd umgesetzt!

Robin Stevens setzt das ganze ein bisschen im Stil von Sherlock Holmes fort.

Hazel Wong ist 13 Jahre alt und noch nicht so lange auf dem Internat. Ihre Herkunft aus Hongkong hat ihr den Einstieg nicht leicht gemacht, und nach und nach erfährt man, wie sich ihre Freundschaft zu Daisy entwickelt hat. Hazel erzählt das ganze aus ihrer Sichtweise (wie Watson) und Daisy Wells ist der treibende, alles im Dunkeln aufdecken wollende Kraft ihrer kleinen Detektivgemeinschaft.

Während Hazel eher ruhig und vorsichtig ist, lässt sie sich sehr sehr leicht von Daisys unbeschwerter Art mitreißen. Die beiden Mädels sind eigentlich wie Feuer und Wasser, vor allem, da Daisy ein sehr beliebtes und angesehenes Mitglied des Internats ist, zu dem die Jüngeren aufsehen - und das lässt sie sich auch gerne anmerken! Aber es steckt doch noch etws mehr dahinter. Die forsche, unerschrockene Art ist Hazel oft nicht ganz geheuer, aber die beiden entwickeln ein tolles Gespür.

Sie finden recht schnell Verdächtige, die hinter dem Mord an Mrs Bell stecken könnten und ermitteln auf eigene Faust auf eine ihnen ganz eigenwillige und geschickte Weise.

Dabei sind sie nicht immer einer Meinung und ich muss gestehen, dass mir Daisy anfangs nicht unbedingt sympathisch war. Anfangs ;)

Ich konnte jedenfalls super selber miträtseln, denn es gibt viele Spuren, denen man folgen kann, aber auch Hinweise, die gut gestreut sind und auch zu dem empfohlenen Lesealter passen. Das könnte an manchen Stellen auch ein bisschen unheimlich für jüngere Gemüter sein.

Die Schreibweise ist an die historische Zeit angepasst, aber trotzdem noch so gehalten, dass es Kindern und Jugendlichen leicht fallen wird; es ist durchweg flüssig und spannend und ich wollte es nicht mehr aus der Hand legen.

Hinten im Buch gibt es dann noch ein kurzes Glossar (von Daisy) über ein paar der Begriffe, von denen der ein oder andere vielleicht nicht so geläufig ist, in ihrer Art auf witzige Weise präsentiert.

Ich freue mich jedenfalls schon sehr auf den zweiten Band und hoffe, dass auch die anderen Teile bald ins Deutsche übersetzt werden.

Der zweite Fall "Teestunde mit Todesfall" erschien am 16. Februar 2017
(im Original sind bereits 5 Bände der Reihe erschienen)

Allison says

The language in the American version has been Americanized. I read maybe two pages and couldn't take it, it's so pervasive. I can see modifying the spelling (maybe), but it's completely altered so that it sounds like it's taking place in modern America. (The girls are in 7th grade, etc). I'm going to have to try to get the UK version somehow because it's all wrong!

I think it's a shame. Shouldn't American kids have a chance to realize that things are different in other parts of the world, and in other time periods? They might find it exotic. Interesting. Eye-opening. I know when I was a kid, I loved books like that. I never went to boarding school in 1930s England, but I can still imagine it, and the language is part of the ambiance. Kids can handle completely imaginary worlds with words that never existed before. How condescending to think that they are incapable of understanding a slightly different version of English. This just seems like dumbing down to me.

Kate (infinitelynovel) says

This was a wonderful, fun read! *Murder Most Unladylike* gave me serious Sherlock and Watson vibes (which was obviously intentional, since both main characters affectionately call one another "Sherlock" and "Watson"). The only thing stopping me from rating this 5 stars was Daisy: she was really rather arrogant, and spent a lot of the novel manipulating Hazel. That doesn't quite scream friendship to me...

Lidya says

Rating: 3.8/5

This is not retelling of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, instead an inspired by Conan Doyle's character, imprinted into two young girls from 1934. A timeline before World War I, a rather peaceful time for young adults learning in boarding school typically built across the UK. I like both protagonist' characterizations. Daisy Wells is a privileged stuck up aristocrat girl with too many admirers. Making her object of the envy of the sidekick, Hazel Wong.

Daisy was probably thinking about the murder, and fashionable hats, and who cheated on the math test, all at once, as though she were really three people instead of one.

I like how she was being described as a genius but not too harsh like Doyle's did to Sherlock. Daisy Wells still a delicate girl with too many touchy subjects, she is disillusioned by her capability. Most of the time she dismissed what Hazel had to say. In this case, they are different with Sherlock & Watson even though they would like to address each other as "Sherlock and Watson".

It was this sort of thing that made Daisy so fascinating. Almost all the younger shrimps had pashes on her. (A pash, in case you haven't heard the word before, is school talk for something that is rather difficult to describe—I suppose it's being in love, but different somehow, and so quite all right with everyone.)

So it's understandable that Daisy Wells has so many admirers as she is so popular within the clique and school. She knows how to blend with other people, does not act as the smart one, but as the closet ass hole so people would like you. A great lesson to all of us who is struggling to make friend out there.

She wanted to seem a fool, and she was pausing or flubbing her responses because she had decided that a particular fact was not something she ought to remember.

And I love how Hazel described her admiration to Daisy. Hazel came from Hongkong, with black hair and ebony eyes she has been called "The one who came from The Orient". Hazel is a logical person yet she still has feelings to guide her instinct. Unlike Daisy, she listens to other people and take their feelings into account. The story of how Hazel Wong to blend in after watching Daisy closely for some time.

The Daisy Wells we all pashed on was, in short, not real at all, but a very clever part. I watched her running around, shrieking, turning cartwheels, and looking as though she did not care about anything apart from beating St. Simmonds at lacrosse on Saturday, and I began to see that all the time there was a different Daisy underneath.

Daisy Wells is a multifaceted person and she has Hazel Wong to understand her, to nurture her quirkiness and all of her wild deduction. She almost like Sherlock Holmes, the difference only in the hair and physical appearance. Thought, what I like from Daisy, she is not a junkie (because her condition is not allowed to

have one).

The brown paper parcel was full of lotus-paste moon cakes from our kitchen. They are my favorite food, sweet and heavy on my tongue, like nothing here in England. But all the same, I wish my mother would not send them. Lavinia saw one once, and for weeks after told everyone that I ate heathen pies.

I like the humour Hazel made every time Brittons find everything about Asian is weird. Though it's understandable how white people think about our cuisine, or culture, especially Chinese. Because they are basically everywhere and become a pop culture long before Japanese do.

I sat on my strict gray bed and stared around me at the rows of identical bedsteads and the dismally scratchy and gray bedspreads. I was quite upset by the sight of it, and I remember wondering whether Deepdean might not be doing so well for itself after all. (I had not yet discovered that in England, the way of showing that you are very rich is to pretend that you are very poor and cannot afford things like heating or new shoes.)

The way she is assessing Brittons behaviour is very amusing. British people are humble yet arrogant in the inside. They like to be perceived as normal people instead flaunting around their money or belongings. Though this case highly unlikely happened these days, but I always like British celebrities always looking so humble.

I want to review Robin Stevens' description about boarding school. I finally know how strict a boarding school in the UK. It was indeed so vexing and probably the main reason why the students went wild once they were out of school. The terms; bunbreak, biscuits, canoodling, maybe not popular in American literary, but Robin used it well in this book. And I love every bit of it.

Michela says

Vado ogni anno a Mare di Libri, il festival dei ragazzi che leggono, che si svolge a Rimini: sono svergognatamente fuori target, naturalmente, dato che ormai ho 30 anni, ma è la piccola Michela che ha scoperto Harry Potter a 14 che ogni anno si sente accolta a questa manifestazione (che purtroppo allora non

c'era, essendo il 2018 la IX edizione).

Nell'incontro in cui hanno presentato la serie che comincia con questo libro, mi aspettavo sì di parlare con qualche autore che aveva tanto amato Agatha Christie, ma non Robin Stevens: un'altra hufflepuff (tassofrasso per i nuovi lettori di Harry Potter) come me, in un vestitino azzurro pieno di cupcake (stupendo!), dolcissima, simpatica e molto arguta. Quando ho fatto firmare la mia copia, nonostante la mia (veneranda) età, mi ha consegnato un badge della Detective Society dei libri. Lo porterò con orgoglio. Non mi ci è voluto molto per convincermi a leggere questo libro, che ho divorato oggi, dalla prima all'ultima pagina.

Daisy e Hazel sono due studentesse di una boarding school inglese degli anni 30: scoprono che c'è stato un caso di omicidio a scuola e, grazie alla loro società investigativa (di due soli membri!), cercano di risolvere il mistero. La particolarità delle due protagoniste è che Daisy è la ragazza perfetta e popolare, ma nonostante questo facile da amare, e che Hazel è un po' timida ma molto intelligente... e viene da Hong Kong: il padre, amante dell'Occidente dove ha studiato lui stesso, l'ha mandata a studiare là.

Gli opposti si attraggono e si completano, e la storia di questa amicizia è veramente una di quelle che ti scalda il cuore. È un libricino di 270 pagine, scorrevolissimo, intrigante, ben scritto, con personaggi che non puoi fare a meno di amare.

Concludo solo con una piccola storia: una bimba che aspettava di firmare le sue copie (tra le tante ragazze e ragazzi in fila) era proprio dietro di me. In realtà aveva già fatto firmare i suoi libri, ma aveva convinto la madre a comprarle anche l'ultimo della saga, e quindi aveva di nuovo atteso il suo turno. Mi sono offerta di lasciarle il mio, anche se eravamo le ultime due, ma è stata molto garbata e ha aspettato. Si è fatta un selfie con lei, ha la sua firma... eppure quando scende, eccitatissima, dal palchetto dove c'era il tavolo e l'autrice, esprime un altro desiderio: un abbraccio. Inutile dire che la madre, io e tutto il resto dei presenti l'abbiamo incoraggiata a chiedere, dato che la Stevens era tanto tenera e dolce come i cupcake che aveva sul vestito. Insomma, dopo il caloroso abbraccio, la bimba era la più felice della sua specie, scossa da gridolini da piccola fangirl in erba. Quando i libri ti rendono tanto felice ed entusiasta, devono essere belli, e farti particolarmente bene.

Sarah says

I really enjoyed this book!

First of all, the whole 1930's setting really appealed to me and I thought that it was pulled off really well. I don't have much knowledge of boarding school for girls in the 30's, but the language the girls were using and the descriptions of the clothes, food and lessons seemed pretty on point to me. I loved the language they used and it was full of 'rathers', and 'frightfuls', and 'shocking good sport' and so on and it just really amused me! It made the world come alive to me. In my head I really could imagine the two main characters of Daisy and Hazel and their lessons.

The plot itself was fun as well, the mystery of who murdered the science teacher was fast paced and full of mystery. I liked the added fact that the body went missing as well, so no one knew that there had been a murder. And I didn't guess who the murderer was until the girls themselves realised, so well done to the book for that!

I loved the character of Hazel, hearing the story from her point of view was great because you got such a good insight to her. It was interesting to have the added fact that she is from Hong Kong and not at all like a 'typical 1930's English girl,' and to hear how she so wants to be like Daisy and the others is quite heart-breaking. There is subtle racism towards her as she is not English, and I think it is good for children to read this sort of things in books, and hopefully understand that what they are saying is not ok. But it was well done as this issue is not the main focus of the book, and it doesn't take over from the story. Also another issue you can see being raised, is the friendship between Hazel and Daisy. Daisy is a bully, she bullies Hazel into lots of things, and she uses friendship as tool to do it. I'm sure we have all known a 'Daisy' before, who is so good at everything, likes to be in the know, likes to be first, glamorous and so on. But you cannot help but like her as well! Towards the end of the book she does start treating Hazel a bit better, and I hope she continues to be a better friend!

I also love the design of the front cover, it is so simple and yet effective! I Love it!

All in all, this is a great detective book, with some fantastic characters, a good mystery with an amusing setting! I cannot wait to read the next one!
