

Six Stories

Matt Wesolowski

Orenda Books (Jun 1, 2017)

Softcover \$14.95 (280pp)

978-1-910633-62-5

Wesolowski is especially skilled at utilizing the setting to enhance his naturally suspenseful story.

Inspired by the podcast *Serial*, Matt Wesolowski weaves a dazzling fictional mystery in his book *Six Stories*, told in the form of interviews with those involved.

Set twenty years after a teenager's mysterious death in a remote United Kingdom area known as Scarclaw Fell, *Six Stories* offers a Rashomon-style variety of points of view, combined with realistic characters, teen angst, tales of the supernatural, and surprising twists.

Some novelists use an unreliable narrator as a plot device; Wesolowski multiplies the effect, as different interpretations of events are offered by people who were present at the time of the incident. Across a distance of twenty years, the effect is further magnified, as shown in an exchange between interviewer and interviewee:

Have you been in contact with any of the others since?

Not at all. I think a few of them added me on Facebook. God, my memory's so bad.

The book's verisimilitude in characterization, setting, and diction allows fiction to imitate life—in this case the popular nonfiction *Serial* podcast. *Six Stories* is written mostly as a series of transcripts of a fictional podcast, titled *Six Stories*. Its host is one of the primary voices that guide the mystery's revelation—but not the only one.

To call *Six Stories* a fictionalized version of a *Serial*-type podcast doesn't do justice to Wesolowski's gripping writing, inventiveness, or the elements of a classic mystery that appear here in a slightly different format than the norm.

Wesolowski is especially skilled at utilizing the setting to enhance a naturally suspenseful story—he's written horror novellas set on the Northumberland coast and the forests of Sweden, respectively, and in this case, the forbidding landscape of Scarclaw Fell becomes a character in its own right.

While those who enjoy the *Serial* podcasts will probably enjoy *Six Stories* as well, it's perhaps more notable for those who love classic mysteries. *Six Stories* offers a new style of mystery, one that encapsulates the twenty-first century, the Internet, and social media, even as its characters struggle to recall—or forget—a time before such things.

PETER DABBENE (May/June 2017)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.