

Watchman William: Ghost Detective

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Mike Phillips, Illustrator

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Young readers can hunt for clues and solve mysteries along with a comical ghost and his young friend in *Watchman William: Ghost Detective*.

William was a night watchman during the time of Elizabeth I. Over four hundred years later, his ghost now resides in Hardleigh Manor, a grand estate converted into a hotel. He generally spends his days reading about Sherlock Holmes' adventures and stealing cookies from the kitchen. With the help of his newfound friend, Thomas, the groundskeeper's grandson, he takes a page from Sherlock's book and uses his ghostly powers to solve some very puzzling mysteries around the manor.

The book is divided into five mini-mysteries ranging from a stolen bicycle to a missing bag of money. As the duo investigates, William takes detailed notes about any odd behavior or strange circumstances he observes. The notes are a great way for young readers to recap as they go, helping them piece together the clues so they can help solve the mysteries alongside William and Tommy.

Whether he's dressing in ladies' clothing or fumbling with a cell phone, William's adventures are often riddled with humor that the target audience of seven- to nine year olds will enjoy. Mike Phillips's illustrations show great expressions and pepper the fun stories with more humor.

On occasion, the stories take small detours away from the main mystery. Readers will get a scene of William having a snack in the park or stealing a croissant from the kitchen. These snippets generally help build the reader's understanding of the characters and setting, and rarely slow down the story. Generally, the stories are well paced and often end with a fun twist.

The book is written in British English, so there may be occasional terms that young American readers are unfamiliar with, like the "boot" of a car. This isn't necessarily a detraction, as many children might enjoy learning the new words and phrases.

Though a little more participation from Tommy might be a welcome addition for future Watchman William books, this mystery book for juvenile readers is a fun way to get young minds churning and, most importantly, appreciating reading.

ALICIA SONDHI (July 27, 2012)

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