



2005

Shakespeare's Secret

Mary Chapman

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Broach, Elise. *Shakespeare's Secret*. Henry Holt, 2005. ISBN 0805073876. \$16.95. 250 p.

Reviewer: Mary Chapman

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Detective and Mystery Stories; Contemporary Realistic Fiction; Historical Fiction;

Subject: Shakespeare William -- Juvenile Fiction; Shakespeare William -- Authorship -- Juvenile Fiction; Friendship -- Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews

Hero is the new girl in 6th grade and not adjusting very well. Being named after a character in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* doesn't help either, and the teasing begins when one of the students in her class reveals that her pet dog's name is Hero too -- what a coincidence. Hero tries not to get too involved with Shakespeare stuff -- that's her dad's job, not hers. But, she can't ignore Shakespeare when she learns that a valuable diamond, possibly owned by Anne Boleyn and linked to the identity of the real Shakespeare, is hidden somewhere in her house. Mrs. Roth next door knows a lot about the diamond and is intent on being Hero's friend. And there's a boy named Danny, one of the most "popular" boys at school, who seems interested in being her friend too and finding that diamond with her.

This is an engaging mystery on several levels. Broach deftly intertwines the mystery of the missing diamond with the question of Shakespeare's identity. Kids will find this book hard to put down. Broach introduces interesting insight into Elizabethan history and theories about Shakespeare's writings and authorship. She also includes a brief historical note and a helpful timeline as end material. *Shakespeare's Secret* would be great way pique children's interest in Shakespeare. Broach creates believable characters and young readers will be able to relate to Hero's awkwardness at being the new kid in school and the way she deals with being tormented by insensitive classmates.