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Jackaby



Synopsis

“Sherlock Holmes crossed with Buffy the Vampire Slayer.” Chicago Tribune Newly arrived in New Fiddleham, New England, 1892, and in need of a job, Abigail Rook meets R. F. Jackaby, an investigator of the unexplained with a keen eye for the extraordinary—including the ability to see supernatural beings. Abigail has a gift for noticing ordinary but important details, which makes her perfect for the position of Jackaby’s assistant. On her first day, Abigail finds herself in the midst of a thrilling case: A serial killer is on the loose. The police are convinced it’s an ordinary villain, but Jackaby is certain the foul deeds are the work of the kind of creature whose very existence the local authorities—with the exception of a handsome young detective named Charlie Cane—seem adamant to deny. “The rich world of this debut demands sequels.” Kirkus Reviews, starred review “We honestly couldn’t put it down.” Nerdist.com “Toss together an alternate 19th-century New England city, a strong tradition of Sherlockian pastiche, and one seriously ugly hat, and this lighthearted and assured debut emerges, all action and quirk.” Publishers Weekly

• A Top Ten Fall 2014 Kids’ Indie Next Pick • A 2014 Kirkus Reviews Best Book for Young Adults • A 2015 YALSA Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults Title • A 2015 Pacific Northwest Book Award Winner • A 2015–2016 Georgia Peach Award Nominee • A Junior Library Guild Selection

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I understand why Sherlock Holmes is so appealing to younger readers. I would suggest that his

matter-of-fact approach, occasional shyness and awkwardness, eccentricity, independence, and direct speaking style make him a very accessible character. I also understand why so many authors have created so many different young Sherlock Holmes characters for younger readers. The problem I encounter in many of those books, though, is that the authors work so hard to place young Sherlock into the Holmes canon that they overlook plot, character and action in their focus on making their young Sherlock look like he will grow into the classical adult Sherlock. As a consequence sometimes the books are more like academic or fanboy experiments than entertaining reads. (The lesser efforts are just exercises in name dropping.) All of this is the long way around to "Jackaby". Here we have a young Sherlock type and a young Watson type, but no effort is made to observe all of the detailed Holmes niceties. Rather, Jackaby is free to develop as a new, different character, with a refreshingly distinct and yet still engaging style. He's still a bit of a know it all, still a bit supercilious, and still an odd combination of encyclopedic knowledge, eccentricity, and detachment. We're still in 1892, although in New England rather than Baker Street. Oh, and our hero Jackaby has the ability to see spirits and uses his supernatural skills in the course of his investigations. I went in to this expecting that the supernatural angle might be relied upon as a quick and dirty way to resolve mysteries and conclude investigations, but that isn't true. While the mysteries are a bit obvious, the author plays fair enough with the investigative process.

What caught my eye first about Jackaby was its beautiful cover and the blurb about it being Doctor Who meet Sherlock clinched it for me as a need to read book. Jackaby did not disappoint. The story follows Abigail Rook as she tries to make her way in the world. She's just arrived in New Fiddleham disappointed from what should have been her great adventure, but only turned out to be too much work for not enough reward. Still eager to find her place in the world and not have to rely on her parents she takes a job with the eccentric R. F. Jackaby an investigator who is more than he seems. What follows is a sometimes serious, sometimes funny, and often insane investigation of the strange and chilling murder of a reporter. Jackaby surprised me with its delightful prose that pulled me right into the world William Ritter has created. Ritter does an excellent job weaving together his words as he paints a delightful Victorian setting and more than often I would actually stop reading just to re-read a passage of description to take in the scene he was describing. Words that jump off the page at you and pull you right into the story is something I really enjoy reading but don't often see. Each of the characters was a delight to meet and grow to know as I made my way through this book. Abigail's strong personality and optimistic spin on things helps to root me in the ground whenever Jackaby starts to get a little crazy. And what's not to like

about the odd investigator? His quirks, like his affection for his silly hat, and his tendency not to notice the normal things are endearing qualities. And whenever I almost lost myself in his silliness he always does something to remind me how sharp he really is.

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