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Team Mainville

Learning Log 1

Essential question: What makes a great mystery novel?

My Process: Investigate and report

Date: October 11, 2024| **Hours spent:** 6 hours 30 minutes

Questions/goals that i will explore that will help me start answering my essential question:

- Define what a “**great**” mystery novel is
- Read a mystery novel and rate it using my criteria of a “great” mystery novel
 - A Good Girl's Guide To Murder by Holly Jackson

Resources I have used to answer the question(s): See the very last page for my sources.

Reporting on my learning:

- **My definition of a great mystery novel:**
 - A powerful first chapter
 - A complicated main character that evolves throughout the story
 - Original plot
 - Short engaging chapters with cliffhangers (good pace)
 - The author writes in a way that you can picture the story in your head using effective and descriptive mood and language
 - There needs to be a dead body somewhere in the book
 - A limited number of suspects
 - Suspenseful dialogue
 - Ensures the reader can play detective and try to figure out the mystery (the author drops clues along the way)
 - Lots of plot twists
 - Red herrings (when the author tricks you to think the wrong conclusions)
 - A great and satisfying ending “How did i not see it before?”

- **Review of A Good Girl's Guide To Murder:**

- **A powerful first chapter:** The first page starts with Pip's capstone of trying to solve the murder of Andie Bell, a hometown case. She believes Sal is not the killer of Andie Bell. Although she isn't allowed to make contact with the Singhs (Ravi), she decides to anyway.
- **A complicated main character that evolves throughout the story:** At the beginning of the book, Pip starts off as a curious senior in highschool, wanting to solve a murder for her capstone. Throughout the book, she starts to reveal life threatening information about what happened on that night. Her dog dies, she gets threatened multiple times, yet keeps going. By the end of the book, she becomes a resilient young woman with lots of fire in her.
- **Original plot:** This is the only book I have read with the main character solving a hometown case as a capstone project, let alone being so close to the case.
- **Short engaging chapters with cliffhangers (good pace):** The first chapter ends off in suspense Pip Saying the 0.25% murder cases have a fatal ending and "Sal Singh is why". Additionally each chapter is short and concise with 1-8 pages at most and plenty of dialogue.
- **The author writes in a way that you can picture the story in your head using effective and descriptive mood and language:** When Pip describes Andie, 5'6, long blonde hair, blue eyes wearing dark jeans and a cropped blue shirt. I can picture exactly how she looks in my head.
- **There needs to be a dead body somewhere in the book:** There are multiple deaths starting with Andie (the victim) a past death following with Barney (Pip's dog) as a threat.
- **A limited number of suspects:** Although there are about half a dozen suspects in AGGGTM, they aren't all given at the same time. Each one develops into another. At the beginning Pip suspects a multitude of people who are not actually

very involved in the case. Later she has her suspicions of Max Hastings, and then finally she finds out it is Mr. Ward, Andie's own father.

- **Suspenseful dialogue:** Throughout the book, Pip goes around interviewing friends and suspects of Andie Bell, most of which do not want to talk to her or reveal any information about that night. Each time, Pip learns something new, life threatening or more evidence which keeps us on our toes and keeps our hearts beating.
- **Ensures the reader can play detective and try to figure out the mystery (the author drops clues along the way):** Along with Pip, I was able to act as a detective throughout the book to try and guess and find clues to who actually killed Andie Bell.
- **Lots of plot twists:** At the start of the book it is believed that Andie was simply killed by Sal, her boyfriend. We soon learn that it isn't that simple, Stanley Forbes believes Sal picked Andie up in his car, took her to a secondary location, murdered her and then drove her to another location to hide her body. He then ditched his car and walked home. During the span of the book, we go from thinking the killer was Max Hastings, to Naomi Ward, to Becca Bell and Jason Bell to finally learning it was Mr. Ward who Killed his own daughter and framed it on Sal Singh, her boyfriend.
- **Red herrings (when the author tricks you to think the wrong conclusions):** At the beginning of the book, Pippas lack of substantial evidence was starting to make me believe that the police were right, Sal killed his own girlfriend. However, midway through the book I strongly believed that Max Hasting had killed Andie because of his heavy involvement with the drugs at the calamities and all evidence pointed to him. I was so ready for Max Hastings to get arrested because I truly believe there would be no other conclusion than him killing Andie but also Sal! At the end of the book I found out that all my conclusions were wrong! The one person I felt certain would never be able to kill Andie and Sal did: Mr.Ward, Andie's own father.

- **A great and satisfying ending “How did i not see it before?”:** The book ends with having Mr. Ward kill Andie. I had a “how did i not see that before” as Pip was always hanging around the Ward house, i should have been able to guess that he was the killer of not one but two people, Andie and Sal.

A paragraph using my findings from above to answer my essential question:

The first step of this project, Mme Mainville and I worked on a list which defined “great” in a mystery book. We used 3 websites as well as my own opinions and shortened the list to 12 strong ideas which support “great”. Next I read AGGGTM as my first book using my “great” scale. I found that this book was a 12/12 rating and every single definition was confirmed, the book was perfect in all aspects as you can see above. One of my favourite criterias that was met was the red herrings! I could never guess who the murderer was, I kept thinking it was one person, but it really wasn't. This is something I adore about Holly Jackson's books! Additionally, I found that I would like to read lower quality mystery books as well, not just 5 star reads.

Reflection of my process. What is working and what isn't?

- Outline of the steps i took to complete my first part of the project:
 - **September 18:** I chose my essential question and process during a Capstone meeting where Mme. Mainville approved of it. “What makes a great mystery novel?”, investigate and report.
 - **September 24:** Mme. Mainville and I spent an hour in D block working on the first steps of my project, defining what a great mystery novel looks like. We created a list with my own ideas, then researched 3 other websites and added their key elements. We selected elements that were repeated multiple times in all 4 lists and created our own list of criteria. (1 hour 30 min)
 - **September 26:** During Resource i reread (for the 3rd time) the first bit of AGGGTM, and started using my criteria to analyze and rate this book. After lunch because I finished all my French work in class, I read more of the book and took more notes to support my criteria of a great mystery novel. (2 hours)
 - **October 2:** During PLT i decided to finish my study on AGGGTM and reflect on myself as a learner thus far. Because the library is closed today during PLT, I can't begin to read my second book for this log. However, I have some good options for my next read! The Cheerleaders? The Naturals? We Were Liars? (1 hour)

- **October 4:** During lunch and after lunch in Resource, I decided to go over my capstone log and reflect on my project so far. (1 hour 30 minutes)
- **October 10:** During PLT and lunch I reviewed my learning log and added my finishing touches so that it is ready for Mme Mainville to read and mark. (30 minutes)
- Reflection of my project so far of what's working and what's not:
 - So far what's working for me is to read one mystery novel per log and rate it using my criteria while giving evidence with support. What else is working really well for me is to always ask questions, especially when im unsure of something. For the stuff that isn't working for me is working on my project at home. I never like to do homework at home so I decided I'm going to work on my learning logs all at school when i have the chance. I want to utilize my time in Resource. (especially during the 2 hour time slots on PLT days)

Reflection of myself. What am I learning about myself and how can I use this information moving forward?

- A description of myself as a learner:
 - I wasn't sure what type of learner I was, so I decided to take a quiz through a trusted website. It turns out I am a **kinesthetic learner**! That means that I like to be a part of my learning and not off to the side listening to the teacher and copying down notes. I like to be hands-on which makes sense because I prefer to make posters when I'm given the option. I also like to make flashcards to help me study for vocab quizzes or even biology. It helps me retain the information better than just reading and rereading the same text.
- My preferred learning style and how i am applying it while working on my project:
 - My preferred learning style is a **kinesthetic learner**! I'm applying this type of learning to my project by talking my ideas out with a teacher but visually as well. For example, at the beginning of this log, Mme Mainville and I created a visual list of what makes a great mystery novel. This really helped me gather my ideas and see them more clearly.
- How i can use it as a strength for my project moving forward

- I can go to Mme Mainville or Ms. Dawsons and talk out my potential ideas with them, we can also create visual notes like Mme Mainville and I did last time. I can also ask questions when I have them so I can clarify anything that might be confusing for me.

Further questions/goals i have as a result of my work, which will guide my next log:

- **Possible authors I can ask to interview**
 - Holly Jackson
 - Karen M McMannus
 - Jennifer Lynn Barnes
 - Frieda McFadden
 - Riley Sager
- Read The Naturals by Jennifer Lynn Barnes and rate it using my “great” scale: The Naturals

My next steps: Give my pitch to Mme Mainville, as well as showing her what I have so far for my log, get some more critiques and other ideas from her. I also want to ask her what I should do/answer for my second learning log. Next I'll read The Naturals by Jennifer Lynn Barnes. Additionally, I will try to reach out to some of my favourite mystery novel authors and interview them about their perspectives of a mystery novel.

The date I will complete this work: I want to complete my second learning log by November 15.

Works Cited

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