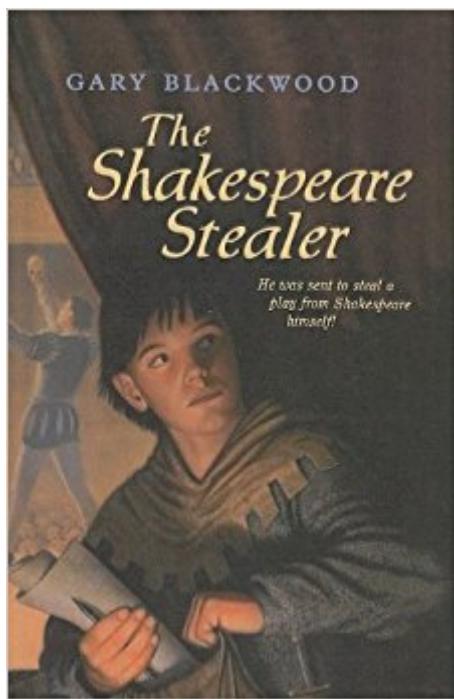


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# The Shakespeare Stealer



## Synopsis

A young orphan named Widge is sent to the Globe Theater to steal the script of Hamlet from Shakespeare's own company of players. When he becomes friends with the actors, he must decide whether to disobey his sinister master or betray his new friends. An ALA Notable Book.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 840 (What's this?)

Series: Shakespeare Stealer

Hardcover: 216 pages

Publisher: Perfection Learning (July 1, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0780799771

ISBN-13: 978-0780799776

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.6 x 7.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (130 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,656,669 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #111 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Renaissance #27954 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Action & Adventure

Age Range: 10 - 13 years

Grade Level: 5 - 8

## Customer Reviews

Children's works of historical fiction often suffer from a common malady. If the writer is not completely comfortable with the time period they're writing about, they'll hang everything on a famous person and leave it at that. When I saw that this book was entitled, "The Shakespeare Stealer", I was sure that it would be a book in which a young boy befriended the great William Shakespeare and had an impact on history, yadda yadda yadda. But Gary Blackwood's not your everyday run-of-the-mill writer. There's a truly interesting story at the heart of this tale and a truly talented hand behind the writing. Blackwood doesn't just place his book in the past. He authenticates it by drawing you back into a fully realized historical moment in time. The result is a whole lot of fun and a book that I'll be shoving into the hands of any kid forced to read something realistic for a book report. Widge received his odd name when the mistress of an orphanage took one look at him as a babe and said, "Och, the poor little pigwidgeon" (thereby surprising anybody

who thought that J.K. Rowling had made up the name). Since birth the boy has been either an orphan or a lowly apprentice. He was put under the thumb of one Dr. Bright when he was seven, and through this master he learned a form of shorthand that no one else in the world knew. Such a talent is bound to attract interest, however, and at the age of fourteen Widge is bought by a man who needs the boy's talents professionally. Sent to London, Widge is told to watch a performance of Hamlet and take down every word. A series of small mishaps land him not in the audience, however, but as a member of the acting troupe.

The Shakespeare Stealer is a book about a poor orphan boy, called Widge, living in Shakespearean England who can write a rare coded language in which symbols for each word can be written as the words are said. His forceful master, taking advantage of his ability, orders him to go to the Globe Theater to steal Shakespeare's Hamlet by writing down the lines of the play as the actors are acting them out. Though Widge, the poor, nameless orphan boy feels stealing the play is wrong, he enters the Globe Theater to copy down the play Hamlet. He is found by the players at the theater and they take him in and treat them as one of their own, while also being trained as an actor. While living with one of the men from the Lord Chamberlain's Men (the playing troupe) Widge, a country boy, adjusts to city life. However, Widge has not forgotten the threat his master made to him if he did not bring him a copy of Hamlet, and Widge knows that he has sent someone to London to find him and bring him back to the country. While living in London, Widge's accent is not the only thing that changes. For the first time in his life Widge can make decisions on his own. He learns about the meaning of words such as honesty, trust, loyalty, and friendship. He begins to realize that by working and living with the Lord Chamberlain's men, he is betraying them. The real reason he came to the theater was not to become a player, but to steal from Shakespeare himself, and consequently hurting the people who he is now closest to. Widge tries to decide whether he should betray his friends and copy the play or betray his master and stay in the Lord Chamberlain's Men for acting, not for the purpose of stealing a play, even though it means if his master finds him, Widge will receive severe punishment.

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