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Room One: A Mystery Or Two



Synopsis

Ted Hammond loves a good mystery, and in the spring of his fifth-grade year, he's working on a big one. How can his school in the little town of Plattsford stay open next year if there are going to be only five students? Out here on the Great Plains in western Nebraska, everyone understands that if you lose the school, you lose the town. But the mystery that has Ted's full attention at the moment is about that face, the face he sees in the upper window of the Andersons' house as he rides past on his paper route. The Andersons moved away two years ago, and their old farmhouse is empty, boarded up tight. At least it's supposed to be. A shrinking school in a dying town. A face in the window of an empty house. At first these facts don't seem to be related. But Ted Hammond learns that in a very small town, there's no such thing as an isolated event. And the solution of one mystery is often the beginning of another.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0840 (What's this?)

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Atheneum Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (May 20, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0689866879

ISBN-13: 978-0689866876

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.5 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 57 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #181,862 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #106 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Where We Live > Country Life](#) #1420 in [Books > Children's Books > Mysteries & Detectives](#) #1580 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > School](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Grade 4-6—Red Prairie Learning Center has only 10 students and is facing possible closing unless more families move to the small Nebraska town. Ted, the only sixth grader, loves mysteries, so when he sees a girl's face at the window of a supposedly abandoned farmhouse, he decides to investigate. He meets April, who tells him that ever since her dad died in Iraq, someone has been

stalking their family. She and her mother and younger brother were heading for a relative's place out west when their car broke down. Now they are stranded and are worried about who might be following them. Ted pledges not to turn the family in and agrees to bring them food and supplies. In all the mystery stories that he has read, young detectives don't need interfering grown-ups. However, this is real life, and he begins to wonder if he can handle the situation on his own. But whom can he trust?—and what about his promise to keep the fugitives' secret? The story explores the potential conflict between promises and duty. There is a good balance of seriousness and humor with brisk, realistic dialogue and observations. Small black-and-white illustrations emphasize key points in the plot. Clements's usual excellent sense of character is evident. Both adults and young people are multidimensional, with true-to-life emotions and concerns. There is also a strong message about responsibility and individual courage. The conclusion is unexpected but satisfying, as both the lost family and the struggling town find hope for the future.

—Elaine E. Knight, Lincoln Elementary Schools, IL Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Gr. 3-5. In a one-room school in a small Nebraska town, Ted is the lone sixth-grader sandwiched between four fourth-graders and four eighth-graders. Besides doing his chores on the family farm, he delivers newspapers, attends 4-H Club meetings, and enjoys reading mystery books. Riding his paper route one morning, Ted spies a girl's face in the window of an abandoned farmhouse. He puts his detective skills to the test as he tries to discover who she is, why she is there, and how he can help her. Though the mystery element in the plot is relatively mild, the story is strong enough that readers will want to find out what will become of Ted's vulnerable new friend. When she entrusts him with a secret, he must decide how best to honor that trust while helping solve her family's dilemma. The convincing, contemporary rural setting is an inextricable element of the novel, which is illustrated with small black-and-white sketches that enhance the refreshingly innocent tone of the story. Carolyn Phelan Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Though Andrew Clements' books--the two that I've read--stop short of being five-star classics for me, I can't quite pinpoint what they're missing. This one, especially, has an engrossing plot, and it addresses themes of homelessness and veterans' issues without toeing a political party line or beating readers over the head. I also found the setting--a tiny Midwestern town on the brink of dying

out in the corporate mega-farm age--refreshingly unexpected. I liked the protagonist and related to his ethical wrestling, and I appreciated the novel's meta-commentary on the appeal of mystery. So I think the missing piece is the same as what it was in Frindle. I think I was noticing the absence of well-developed child characters other than the protagonist. The protagonist of this book does have one peer his own age, but other than that, he's surrounded by adults. Clements portrays adults sensitively and realistically, but given that this is a children's book, I expected to be reading about children!

My fourth grader needed to read a mystery book for her school book report. This seemed to fit the bill as it states there is a "mystery or two" inside this book. It was a great book, however I wouldn't consider this book a mystery at all. I liked the themes of the book - we enjoyed reading about what a one room school looked like as well as discussed why people would be moving away from their town. The issues facing the family in the book were quite serious but the book handles them in an age-appropriate manner. I'd give the book 5 stars if it were indeed a true mystery.

One boys curiosity cracks the case as he dares to make a difference in a small town. I would recommend this to any mystery lover!

Centered on a very engaging sixth grader, this book seems aimed at about the third or fourth grade level. It isn't really a mystery, but is more about promises, duty and responsibility. The setting is realistic, dialogue is sound, motivations and actions make sense. The overall effect is low key and rather mild, but I would think it would be very satisfying for a younger reader.

I really like how Ted thought like it was a mystery. It was really sad to seeing the family that needed help and everything. I really liked how it ended.

My 9 years old son loved the book as well as all Clements' books.

very good book, my grandchildren loved it the type was a little larger and made it faster to read, for a school report.

Andrew Clements is by far one of the best children's authors. My students loved his books.

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