

The Clueless Guide to Solving a Mystery

AUTHOR

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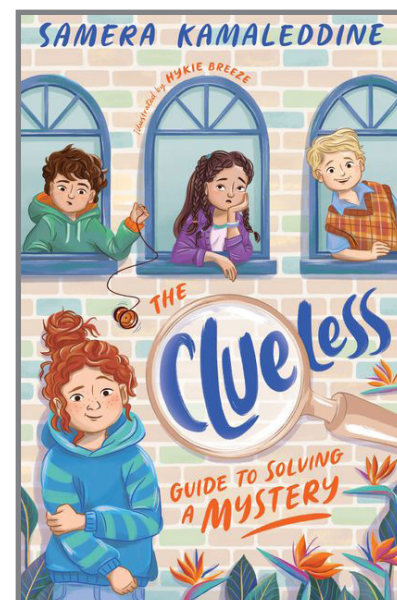
ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid Primary



THEMES

- **Friendship:** Claudia is desperate to make friends with Yasmin and Zayn because they are the 'cool kids' despite the fact they appear to disdain her. At the same time, Orpheus is very willing to be Claudia's friend, but she in turn scorns him. It seems that Claudia is yet to learn what real friendship is about. But the whole experience of working together to solve the mystery has established some connections between the four children that may yet develop into real friendship.
- **Believing in yourself:** Claudia lacks self-confidence and constantly appears to doubt herself. She demonstrates anxiety and constant worry about her parents having left her, and also second-guesses herself as she tries to unravel the mystery. She even resorts to lies to try and impress the cousins.
- **Family:** Some children rarely or never see their grandparents or spend time with them. Claudia not only is close to her grandparents, but actually knows the rest of the residents of the retirement village very well; they are basically family. While she is often critical or baffled by the residents' odd behaviours and quirks, she is very clearly still fond of them all.

STUDY NOTES

- Is this mystery genre familiar to readers? What other books have they read that might be comparable, e.g. The Travelling Bookshop series, The Peski Kids?
 - Make a list of all of the tropes or conventions of the mystery genre students are aware of.
- Have a look at the cover and read the blurb.
 - What mystery conventions can students identify?
 - Are there any elements of the cover and blurb that seem a bit unusual for a mystery?
- Why does Claudia continually emphasise that she is '(temporarily) living' at Boonside, and also regularly mentions how long her parents have been done on their 'once-in-lifetime cruise'?
 - What is she feeling/worried about?
 - Why is she feeling like this?
 - Discuss anxiety (particularly separation anxiety), uncertainty, changes in routine.
- "They are the cousins that everyone wishes they were related to. Especially me" (p 16).
 - Why is Claudia so keen to be friends with Yasmin and Zayn?
 - Why is she dismissive of Orpheus' attempts to make friends with her?
 - What do students think about Claudia's lack of friends? Why do they think this is?
 - Claudia asks some of the residents about making friends. What suggestions would students give her?

- Throughout the novel, the characters employ some original and funny metaphors and similes; for example, “choir full of sad hyenas” and “a sloth performing a gymnastics routine”.
 - Ask students to find as many examples of these as they can throughout the novel.
 - While several characters employ this device, one character in particular is associated with these inventive sayings. What is the effect of this character speaking like this?
 - Why do you think the author has used this technique?
 - Ask students to create their own examples of creative, humorous and highly-effective sayings. Perhaps they could think of events in their school or community that could be accurately described in this way.