

CILIPS COVID-19 Book Reviews – A Good Girl’s Guide to Murder

Reviewer name: Chloe Elder

Book title: A Good Girl’s Guide to Murder

Author name: Holly Jackson

Genre: YA Crime Thriller

Overall Rating: Very good

Brief Summary: Pip (short for Pippa) is a bright and witty student who loves to study almost as much as she loves her friends and family. We meet her as she begins her sixth form Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) on an unconventional topic – a murder that occurred in her town five years prior. As it says in the blurb, ‘The case is closed. Five years ago, schoolgirl Andie Bell was murdered by Sal Singh. The police know he did it. Everyone in town knows he did it. ... Pippa Fitz-Amobi isn't so sure.’

What you liked: Part of the charm of Holly Jackson’s A Good Girl’s Guide to Murder (AGGGTM) is that it stays very true to the general tropes and schema of crime stories. We’re presented with a crime, a protagonist detective who sees things a little differently, and stakes that get higher and more dangerous as our hero comes closer to the truth. But instead of being predictable or monotonous, these familiar storylines serve to immerse the reader more readily into the story.

What makes AGGGTM different from the average crime thriller is the closeness with which we, as readers, follow Pip as she studies the murder and accusation of Sal Singh. The reader is situated over Pip’s shoulder – reading through her interview transcripts and notes (complete with footnoted citations), text and email communication, and – when the investigation ramps up – a scan of the victim’s school diary.

The pace makes this book a page-turner, and the clear detailed writing allows the reader to feel just as much of the detective as the main character. (I wondered, once or twice, if I could solve the mystery on my own. I couldn't.)

Finally, Jackson seems to avoid what I see as one of the pitfalls of other crime thrillers. I often read furiously to the climax of a detective novel only to then trod through a final boring 40 pages of tying up loose ends. Without giving spoilers, each storyline in AGGGTM is given a little climax of its own, and the relationships which had been tested throughout resolve in a realistic and satisfying way.

A Good Girl’s Guide to Murder is a great example of a crime thriller (YA or otherwise) and a thoroughly enjoyable read from start to finish.

Who should read this book?: This book might be of interest to school librarians keeping on top of YA bestsellers or to anyone who likes crime and mystery!

Any additional comments?: CILIPS readers may be interested to know that a FOIA request makes an appearance in the novel!