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The Agency 2: The Body At The Tower



Synopsis

Maryâ™s second adventure as an undercover agent forces her to relive some harrowing childhood experiences as she seeks the identity of a murderer. Mary Quinn is back, now a trusted member of the Agency, the all-female detective unit operating out of Miss Scrimshawâ™s Academy for Girls. Her new assignment sends her into the grimy underbelly of Victorian London dressed as a poor boy, evoking her own childhood memories of fear, hunger, and constant want. As she insinuates herself into the confidence of several persons of interest, she encounters others in desperate situations and struggles to make a difference without exposing â”or losing â”her identity. Maryâ™s adventure, which takes place on the building site of the clock tower of the Houses of Parliament, offers a fictional window into a fascinating historical time and place.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Upâ”Mary Quinn returns in another case for the Agency, a covert all-female detective agency in Victorian London. A man has recently fallen out of the soon-to-be-completed clock tower of the Houses of Parliament. Mary disguises herself as an errand boy and attempts to infiltrate the work site to discover potential suspects. After a rocky start, she finds herself learning much about the

workers and the site engineer, Mr. Harkness, including that someone may be stealing building supplies. She also discovers that her old partner, James Easton, has returned from India after suffering from a bout with malaria. The two quickly join forces to try and solve the murder. This second book is much stronger than the first, both in terms of character development and the central mystery. Mary grows and struggles, first to come to terms with her past and secondly with her growing feelings for James. The two have a fiery relationship that threatens to boil over at any moment as they move from sparring to kissing, sometimes in the span of a page. Through Mary, readers also get an up-close glimpse into the darker side of Victorian London, particularly through her relationship with fellow errand boy Jenkins, who is the sole breadwinner for his family. Mary proves that she is definitely a detective to keep an eye on.

Necia Blundy, Marlborough Public Library, MA
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The second book in the Agency series finds Mary Quinn still undercover at the all-female detective agency that's run out of Miss Scrimshaw's Academy for Girls. Her new assignment is dangerous both because she is tracking a murderer and she must work as an apprentice on the building site of the Houses of Parliament. Disguising herself as a boy brings back memories of Mary's deprived childhood, where assuming a male identity was the only way to keep herself safe. Smart and suspenseful, this offers a solid heroine and a strong sense of life in Victorian England. Grades 8-12. --Ilene Cooper

The Body at the Tower is the second book in The Agency series, and I enjoyed it as much as the others. (Yes, I've read them out of order.) I really enjoy the premise of these detective stories. It's the mid 1800s in London. Our main character, Mary, is a detective working undercover from The Agency, which is known as Miss Scrimshaw's Academy for Girls. It's a bit far-fetched. This teen girl was plucked off the street from a life of crime and trained to be a sleuth in a time when women couldn't even appear in public alone. But... These books are really a lot of fun. In The Body at the Tower, a man has fallen to his death from Big Ben's tower -- still under construction. So Mary poses as a boy and gets a job on the construction crew. She gets in all kinds of close scrapes and daring situations. She always manages to come out on top. We do get to see James Easton again -- the romantic interest from the first book, A Spy in the House. And, the romance STILL doesn't sizzle. I'm partial to historical fiction and I really enjoy detective stories, so The Body at the Tower probably couldn't miss. Yes, it has some flaws. Mary is VERY lucky a lot. But I'm totally entertained

and get caught up in these quick little books. I would recommend you read *A Spy in the House* first to get Mary's background. Give them a try!

After having fallen in love with *A Spy in the House*, I was looking forward to another adventure with Mary and James. While not quite reaching the level of enjoyment that I had with the first book, *The Body at the Tower* was still a great continuation of the series. Following a death at St. Stephen's Tower, The Agency assigns Mary to go undercover as an assistant at the construction site. Her goal is to get more information on the circumstances surrounding the accident. Posing as a lady's companion in *Spy* had its own difficulties, but Mary's new disguise requires her to chop off her hair, bind her breasts, take on a new voice and mannerisms, and even a new name! Mary Quinn becomes Mark Quinn, a twelve year old looking for work in the very male-dominated field. To add to its difficulty, disguising herself as a boy forces memories of Mary's past to resurface, allowing us a glimpse into her life before Miss Scrimshaw's Academy took her in. The mystery was interesting in its own way, but I didn't find it as gripping as its predecessor in *Spy*. I didn't feel as connected with these new characters like I did with the Thorolds, Michael, or even little Alfred Quigley! With a mysterious death, I expected a lot more emotional involvement. Mary and James did not disappoint one bit! With Mary disguised as Mark I knew there would be fun moments ahead. I'm glad, however, that the book didn't linger too long on any confusion between the two and quickly resumed their relationship. Their banter was as delightful as ever and their chemistry definitely went up a few notches. Anything else on these two together would consist of the caps lock key and many exclamation points so I'll just say: I LOVE THEM! The third book, *The Traitor and the Tunnel*, will be released in the U.K. this June and then in the U.S. and Canada in Spring 2012... There is NO WAY I'll be able to wait so I will somehow have to get my grubby little hands on it come June. I simply can't get enough of these characters!

The Agency 2: The Body at the Tower by Y. S. Lee continues the story of Mary Quinn, a spy/detective at an all-female detective agency in Victorian London. This time, Mary disguises herself as a boy after a man has fallen out of the soon-to-be-completed clock tower of the House of Parliament. I love the Agency series so far. They'll full of adventure, have a bit of history, bit of "spy" work going on and I love the time period they take place in. Plus, Mary is a strong, likeable character. Plus, we get to know more about Mary and her past in this book since she dresses in boys clothing, like she used to do when she was an orphan. The only thing that kinda bugged me was more about that the mystery wasn't as strong or as good as the first one or I would have liked it

to be. I found myself more confused than normal on a few things. Still, though, it's a great book/series. Totally recommend it and looking forward to the third Agency book coming out soon

This second installment of "The Agency" was a very solid, satisfying read. I love the character of Mary Quinn. She isn't the usual sort of character often found in historical fiction. Her Chinese/Irish heritage makes her unique, but it's her spirit and determination to live an independent life that is the most admirable. The story starts with a mysterious death at a building site by Parliament. Mary disguises herself as a young boy to investigate for the Agency. However, the assignment isn't as cut and dry as she first thinks. By pretending to be a boy, Mary is forced to deal with the painful echoes of her childhood and finally decide who she wants to be once and for all. The mystery aspect of the novel was solid, but I did have a bit of trouble staying focused on all the details. I loved that James Easton is back from India. Though James is a bit worse for wear from the experience, the attraction between James and Mary seems as strong as ever. The big question is whether James could ever really accept the real Mary. Also, a good twist was the addition of Octavious Jones. This reporter is clever and a bit on the arrogant side, but he and Mary seem to have a lot of creative banter. I could see a triangle develop between Mary, James, and Jones in the next installment. Now that would be something to look forward to! Lee does a great job with describing the plight of the poor working classes in Victorian London. The reader feels sympathy not only for the workers, but also for Mary and her struggles. We want Mary to have it all at the end, but realize that sometimes life gets in the way. I can't wait to see what happens with the next mystery.

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