



About the Book

Olive Oakes loves a good mystery. She keeps a notebook with her at all times, ready to jot down observations about anything that seems out of the ordinary. Along with her cousin Eli, Olive is always looking to follow the clues.

When Olive and her family visit a town called Whispering Woods, she uncovers a strange backstory to the traveling carnival that comes through the area once a year.

With rumors of missing kids and ghost sightings, it's the perfect opportunity for Olive to investigate! The people of Whispering Woods are very secretive, but Olive is ready to solve the mystery of the haunted carousel.

About the Author

Kalynn Bayron is the New York Times and Indie bestselling author of the YA fantasy novels *Cinderella Is Dead* and *This Poison Heart*. Her latest works include the YA horror novel *Make Me A Monster* and the middle grade paranormal adventure *The Vanquishers*.

She is a CILIP Carnegie Medal Nominee, a Bram Stoker Award nominee, a LOCUS Award finalist, and the recipient of the 2022 Randall Kenan Award for Black LGBTQ fiction. She is a classically trained vocalist and musical theater enthusiast. When she's not writing you can find her watching scary movies and spending time with her family.



Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Identify key story elements (setting, character, conflict, resolution)
- Analyze how suspense is created in a mystery
- Describe character interests using text evidence
- Infer meaning from clues in the story
- Write creatively

Pre-Reading Activities

Prediction & Inference

Show students the book's cover.

Questions to ask:

- What mood does the title suggest?
- What might be "haunted" about the carousel?
- What clues do you notice?

Activity: Have students write a short prediction paragraph.

Vocabulary

Preview challenging words

- meticulous
- carousel
- eerie
- investigate
- suspicious
- courage

Activity: Printable Olive Oakes word search
(available on KalynnBayron.com under the Olive Oakes tab)

Discussion Questions

1. How are Olive and Eli related?
2. What is Olive's favorite hobby?
3. Why do you think Olive always carries a notebook and pencil?
 4. Why do you think Olive wants to be a detective?
5. When Olive arrives in Whispering Woods (pg. 22-23) what clues suggest something strange is happening?
 6. Why does Olive think the carousel is haunted?

Inference and Critical Thinking

7. Do you think the carousel is really haunted? Why or why not?
 8. What motivates Olive to investigate?
 9. What risks does Olive take?

Character Analysis

10. How are Olive and Eli's personalities different?
11. What character traits help Olive solve mysteries?

Discussion Themes for Social/Emotional Learning

- Facing your fears
- Trusting your instincts
 - Asking for help
 - Problem solving

Post Reading Activities

Theme Exploration

- What message does this story teach about facing your fears?
 - How does teamwork help solve problems?

Creative Writing Activity

- Write an alternate ending where the mystery has a different cause or the story ends in a different way.
 - Include 2 descriptive sensory details, 1 moment of suspense, a clear resolution

Mystery Map Activity

- Students create a visual map including key locations from the novel, clues discovered, and/or list of suspects.

Cross Curricular Connections

Social Studies

- The history of carousels and amusement parks
 - How mechanical rides work

Art

- Design a haunted carousel
- Design a new amusement park ride with a backstory

Writing

- Building suspense through sensory description

Assessment Ideas and Optional Extensions

Formative

- Exit tickets (“One clue I noticed was...”)
- Character trait charts
- Small-group discussion, observations made about the text

Summative

- Book report
- Creative mystery story writing
- Theme essay with textual evidence/support

Optional Extension

Create Your Own Mystery Fair

- Design a fictional carnival attraction
- Invent a mystery surrounding it
- Present clues to classmates

Become a Detective!

- Have students recreate Olive’s notebook and write down their observations just like Olive.



Printables available on KalynnBayron.com

Author Q & A

Q. Why did you write Olive Oakes and the Haunted Carousel?

A. I wrote Olive Oakes because I love mysteries! When I was younger, I read a lot and some of my favorite books were the Nancy Drew novels by Carolyn Keene. Nancy Drew is a detective who solves all kinds of mysteries. I loved those stories and so I decided to write my own version.

Q. Do you have any pets?

A. I have three dogs. Their names are Hades, Hermes, and Blanco.



Q. What is your favorite color?

A. My favorite color is green!

Q. Why did you become a writer?

A. I decided to become a writer because I love storytelling. I love discovering new worlds and new characters in the pages of a book.

Q. What do you want students to learn from your book?

A. I hope that young readers have fun reading Olive Oakes and I hope that they learn they can do anything they put their minds to. If you want to be a detective, a writer, a singer, and actress, a doctor, a teacher, you can do it! Olive is smart, curious, and determined. If readers see a bit of themselves in her, I think that's a wonderful thing.