



# ELPL Lit Kits Jr.



## *Shakespeare's Secret* by Elise Broach

In this Junior Library Guild Selection, Broach weaves an intriguing literary mystery full of historical insights and discoveries, as a young girl tries to uncover the connections between a missing diamond, a mysterious neighbor, and a link to Shakespeare.

**About the Author:** Elise Broach is the author of the acclaimed novel *Shakespeare's Secret*, as well as several picture books.

Ms. Broach did graduate work in history at Yale University. Her nonfiction research and writing projects have taken her to the deserts of the American Southwest several times. Ms. Broach lives with her husband and three children in Easton, Connecticut, where she writes, edits the library newsletter, and is active in town government.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What do you find out about Hero in the first chapter of the book? What kind of person is she?
2. Describe Hero's experience at school. What makes it so hard for her?
3. Why does Hero start visiting Mrs. Roth's house on a regular basis?
4. Why did Mr. Murphy hide the diamond? Would you have done the same thing?
5. Why did Mrs. Roth hide her connection to Mr. Murphy? Why does that make Hero angry?
6. Hero finds several unlikely friends during the course of the novel, in Mrs. Roth, Danny, and even Aaron. What is it about each of these characters that attracts her? How do these friendships change her?
7. What is Hero's relationship with her parents and sister like? How do they help her as she tries to solve the mystery of the Murphy Diamond?
8. Mrs. Roth's garden is an important setting in the story. What does it represent to Hero? How does the garden connect to other themes in the book?

9. Danny and Beatrice both give Hero advice about making friends. What is their advice? Do you agree with it?
10. At the beginning of *Shakespeare's Secret*, do you think Hero would trade places with her sister Beatrice if given the chance? At the end of the book, would she? Why or why not?
11. Why did Danny send the Murphy diamond to his mother? When Hero found out, why wasn't she angry at him? If you were Danny, what would you have done with the diamond?
12. Shakespeare's play *Much Ado About Nothing* was the initial inspiration for the book. It includes themes of rumor, scandal, betrayal, and mistaken identity. How are these themes part of *Shakespeare's Secret*? Do you think they are part of the typical middle school experience?
13. *Shakespeare's Secret* presents the possibility that Edward de Vere was the real author of the plays attributed to William Shakespeare. Do you believe this? Why or why not?
14. What do you think is the biggest argument for or against Edward de Vere as the author of Shakespeare's plays?
15. If you were a historian, what kind of evidence would help you to feel certain that Edward de Vere was the real author of the plays?
16. If it turns out that William Shakespeare is not the author of these works, would it change your feeling about the plays? Do you think it matters to know the true author? Why or why not?
17. The idea of honor is an important one in *Shakespeare's Secret*. Choose two character—historical or contemporary—and describe what makes their behavior “honorable”.
18. The theme of abandoned children is a recurring one in the book. Elizabeth I, Edward de Vere, Danny, and Anna have all suffered the loss of one or both parents. In the novel, do they seem to have reacted to this loss in similar ways? How are these characters alike, and how are they different?