



Secret Letters

Leah Scheier

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Inquisitive and observant, Dora dreams of escaping her aristocratic country life to solve mysteries alongside Sherlock Holmes. So when she learns that the legendary detective might be her biological father, Dora jumps on the opportunity to travel to London and enlist his help in solving the mystery of her cousin's ransomed love letters. But Dora arrives in London to devastating news: Sherlock Holmes is dead. Her dreams dashed, Dora is left to rely on her wits-and the assistance of an attractive yet enigmatic young detective-to save her cousin's reputation and help rescue a kidnapped heiress along the way.

Steeped in Victorian atmosphere and intrigue, this gripping novel heralds the arrival of a fresh new voice in young adult literature.

Secret Letters Details

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Author : Leah Scheier

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Fatima says

3.5 stars!

This is a fantastic debut by Scheier. I think she has an incredible style in writing and that this novel is a really unique mix of chick-lit and mystery that appeals to YA readers. Dora is an easy going and easy to relate to main character. She knows what she wants and she isn't going to let anything get in her way of getting it, and she's ridiculously cunning and smart. She always has a plan and although they may not always work out, she doesn't let a little bump in the road get in her way, either, because she refuses to accept failure. She's such a motivated character and she wants to bring out the right in the wrongs, and solve everything there is to a mystery, and I really appreciated her.

The plot was a bit slow when it came to the mystery. A lot of it was getting insider information and going undercover, which I thought would be a bit more exciting than it ended up being, but all of it was necessary for the story. Had the mystery that needed to be solved been a little more exciting and dramatic, I think the action preceding the mystery being solved would've been more fun to read about.

Peter Cartwright and Dora make a great team and I loved seeing their two very different personalities clashing and working together. They both have their own stories and their own mysteries, and it was so fun to see them trying to work each other out while also working on the case at hand. I liked that the story spent a lot of time of them getting to know each other rather jumping into a romance that wouldn't be necessary at all, and I think they make a great pair of friends, but more importantly, they make great case partners.

I wish some more of the backstory between both of the characters and Sherlock Holmes had been revealed because I think that would've made for an interesting plot, or interesting plot twists - them getting involved in a case and then somehow getting tangled into Sherlock Holmes' world as well. But I think this was a really wonderful story and although it could get really slow and predictable at times, this was a really fun read!

Yvonne (It's All About Books) says

[

Secret Letters was actually one of my TBR jar picks even though I have been posponing it for quite some time. I'm not sure why, because I always love Sherlock Holmes retellings and this actually sounded like a very entertaini

Clare Cannon says

A Sherlock Holmes inspiration that's impossible to put down. As I became intrigued by the developing mystery I just hoped that the story would be worthwhile, but soon I was so captivated by the two main characters that even if the story was average I knew I'd need to spend more time with them.

The story was good, though not quite superb (and with such great characters, it really could have been!). The problem wasn't the scandals from the past, they were handled much like they are in the classics - talked about but not lived through in detail. Pre-marital and extra-marital affairs form the substance of most of the mysteries, but (as in *Bleak House*, for example) these were carried out by peripheral characters, and the younger ones at the centre of this story held honour in higher esteem.

It was more that the narrative felt uneven, sometimes credible and other times forced, often leaving you to wonder how Dora would have known something, or lumping you with a heavy dose of investigatory recapitulation that dulled the fun. The setting was sometimes true to Victorian England but other times false, particularly when Dora spoke and thought in the voice of a modern teenager for whom Victorian manners seemed ludicrous.

The main story developed credibly, but there were quite a few sidelines left hanging: James and Agatha? James' connection with the secret letters? The pregnant and unmarried side character who considers having an abortion? Lady Rose's relationship with her family?

But as I said, the two main characters were my favourite part of the book. Dora and Peter are two of the most interesting, likeable characters in young adult fiction in a long time. I loved their intelligence, their youthfulness, their triumphs and embarrassments, and even the sad secrets of their pasts borne with sorrowful dignity. Mostly though, I loved their interactions which were the basis of their natural and refreshingly fun friendship, and happily the novel finishes with the excitement of future possibilities.
www.GoodReadingGuide.com

Chelsea Couillard-Smith says

As a big fan of Sherlock Holmes, I was very intrigued by the premise of this novel. I want to be honest in saying that I did not finish it. Of what I did read, I found the writing to be very heavy-handed (lots of telling rather than showing). The first chapter, in particular, felt very rushed - with little introduction to the protagonist as a character, readers are swept up to Baker St., awkwardly dumped with all sorts of background information that would have been more interesting if it had been revealed slowly throughout the novel, and then quickly introduced to the obvious love interest. It failed to hook me, so I moved on. Casual teen mystery readers may enjoy it more than I did. I was hoping for something out of the ordinary, something different from the majority of current teen fiction, and this had all the usual conventions.

A minor quibble - while I have embraced many alternate versions of the Sherlock Holmes story, I could not buy the idea that he could have had any sort of love affair, at least as it was presented here.

Maybe this one just isn't for me.

Kelci says

Amazing book!

Had me on the edge of my seat for nearly the entire book.

The mystery was interesting and wasn't how I thought it would end.

This book comes with surprises, adventure and mystery!

I highly recommend this book if you like a good adventure/mystery.

Vicky says

First of all, thanks to NetGalley for providing this ARC for me to review. Second...I absolutely loved this book!

The story is basically a Sherlock Holmes tale for a younger demographic and aimed more at the girl side of things. While told in a classic mystery style, the main character, Dora, is a young woman. Though it takes place in Victorian London, Dora defies society's norms to help a fellow detective catch murderer. The style of the Holmes novels is kept throughout the story. Secret Letters keeps a slower pace than what most YA's are accustomed to, but it is definitely not lacking in suspense. Though I did have some of the clues worked out by the time I got to the big reveal, there were still a few surprises.

Both Dora and her friend, fellow detective Peter Cartwright, have secrets of their own they are desperate to keep while ferreting out others. Though Dora is ultimately on the trail to help her cousin out of a tight spot, what she does uncover is far wider than mere blackmail.

If you like mysteries—especially ones like Sherlock Holmes—you should pick up a copy of Secret Letters. I also noted that there were enough threads left dangling to hope that this is but the first in a series. I look forward to others should that come to pass. Most definitely recommended.

Chelsey Wolford says

I absolutely love this author! Leah is probably one of the kindest that I have run across since I have been blogging! Her writing is just as sweet as her nature. She took a storyline with a Sherlock twist and made it a masterpiece. When an author takes an already well known piece of literature like Sherlock Holmes or any fairy tale, they are taking a chance in retelling it. All of the classics are already great so to rewrite one with a modern day twist or even a spin off in any context or genre is taking a huge risk. Leah, you did not disappoint, at least not in my opinion!

I have always wondered how authors go about writing mystery novels because they, of course, have to know the ending before they write it or at least have a good idea of where the story line is going to take them. Often times readers can pick up early what is going to take place in novels such as this. I was completely enthralled the entire time that I was reading this book. Even though I could guess which characters were involved I still was shocked and thrown off track by the end of the book. Leah added tiny little surprises that were waiting for readers within each chapter.

Dora is not your typical main female character. She is confident in herself but has a subtle way of showing it. This, again, is a time period when women were not meant to share the same professions or maybe even hobbies as men. Dora was a skilled investigator and she knew that, but she had to be careful as to how she let others on to her little secret. She is very inquisitive and like Sherlock, she does not give up when she knows there may just be a clue in her midst. Dora comes off as a mild mannered female lead and that is a nice change opposed to the attitude and sassy heroine that we are so used to reading about. Dora is a delicate

character; however, she is also extremely clever but is not one to brag about any of her exquisite qualities. She allows her detective to do all the talking!

Peter Cartwright was the male opposite to Dora, as he was a young investigator as well. Peter was, at first, a quiet and cunning character. Later on readers learn that Peter's past had a lot to do with shaping him into possessing a more harsh exterior than most young men his age. I loved the way that treated and valued Dora's investigative skills. Even though she was a woman and most would have frowned upon him doing so, he allowed her to help him and trusted her judgment throughout the story. Sometimes the best characters have more depth to them than meets the eye. Writing characters like these two deserves an award or a freshly baked cake or something commendable!!

Soarin Soraya says

Secret Letters is the type of story that has been lacking lately, in my opinion. We see all these mysteries solved by young women thanks to some supernatural force but almost never with their own wit. And that, that right there is where Secret Letters swoops in and steals the show. Dora's thoughts are quick and precise, her dialogue so snappy that the reader can't help but feel proud of the observations and comebacks as if they were their own. The characters leap from the page with an instant chemistry that truly makes a novel, a story or anything else really come alive. I devoured this book, cover to cover, in one sitting because I absolutely couldn't wait for the next clue to be revealed.

Mac says

A fine young adult read. Lovely characters and very enjoyable story.

Ceitidh says

Read more of my reviews at Dazzling Reads

As a big fan of Y.S.Lee and The Agency series, I HAD to read Secret Letters by Leah Scheier as soon as I got it! With that said, I don't think I need to mention that Secret Letters is a Victorian mystery. So, let's jump into my thoughts about this novel right now!

Plot: The premise of a young girl whose father is the most remarkable detective in England immediately grabbed my attention. Secret Letters is in fact an intriguing Victorian mystery that hooked me right from the first page. Dora and her cousin Adelaide travel to London looking for a detective who could help them in finding the mysterious person who's threatening Adelaide's reputation. However, for Dora, this is not the only reason she travels to London. In fact, she goes there not only to support her cousin but to have the chance to finally meet his illegitimate father and popular detective Sherlock Holmes. Unfortunately, the daughter-father relationship can never be explored, nor we can ever meet the great detective, because he dies in the very first chapter. I was a bit sad that Sherlock would not be a character in the story as I first thought but I dismissed that feeling at the very moment I knew of his death. Why? because at that very moment Peter Cartwright showed up. ♥

Characters: The characters is what I most liked about the book. Dora, the young girl whose deductive skills are worth of a daughter of Mr. Holmes, is a very strong and smart character. She can easily see through the surface. Her intuitive and deductive skills are certainly what I most like about her. I think that Scheier did a wonderful job showing-off Dora's detective potential. Then, there's Peter! Oh Peter! Here is the male character of the story, the hero, the kick-butt guy and the potential love interest. Peter is a young detective in London who meets Dora at the very beginning of the story. He offers Dora the services of his Mentor to help them solve the mystery that brought Dora and her cousin to London. Peter is just so charming and intelligent! Plus the dialogues between him and Dora are very interesting. Cleverness and chemistry at its best! Besides Dora and Peter there are many side characters but somehow I did not get too attached to them. For me, Dora and Peter are the stars of this novel.

Setting: As I previously mentioned, the setting is Victorian London, yet I did not feel myself transported to this particular time period. This is the one thing that didn't satisfy my reading experience which is a pity, since the Victorian setting was one of the main reason I was dying to read this novel. I think that maybe more detailed description would have helped me. I love descriptions by the way, specially when it comes to historical settings. Unfortunately, I didn't get this from Secret Letter and I really missed the Victorian atmosphere that I am so in love with.

So, when it comes to the Victorian atmosphere I wish I could have had more. But regardless this, I enjoyed this novel and I'd like to know what happen next with Dora in another mysterious adventure. Overall, Secret Letters is a good mystery novel with charming main characters that I'd love to see again.

Alicia says

I was engrossed in the story the whole way through and the mystery kept me on my toes. This was a fascinating story about Dora, a young amateur lady detective in Victorian London who starts off just trying to protect her cousin but ends up in a mystery bigger than she thought possible. My favourite character in the story was Peter, a young detective who helps Dora with the case and who values Dora's input and intelligence.

The one thing I didn't like was that it seemed like almost every secondary character had an illicit love affair at some point in their past...but other than that I loved it!

I NEED a sequel! :)

Julie says

I picked this book up because I was intrigued by the premise that Dora, the protagonist, is traveling to London to look up her possible biological father, Sherlock Holmes. I love Sherlock Holmes and a good Victorian mystery, but unfortunately, several pages into the book Dora learns that Sherlock Holmes has died (drowned by a waterfall, no less), and then the reader never hears mention of him again throughout the rest of the book. That was disappointing.

This novel started out strong, but lost steam by the end. I liked the character of Dora, who admits that she has always been seen by her family as a little bit quirky because of her observational nature (which she no doubt

inherited from Detective Holmes). She was confident while simultaneously insecure, and at times brazen--all of these traits being an obvious challenge to the time period and the notion that girls should be seen and not heard. I enjoyed her Holmes-esque observations and descriptions, even if they were totally derived from a Sir Arthur Conan Doyle novel.

What I did not enjoy about this book was the totally disjointed plot. Dora and her cousin originally go to London hoping that Sherlock Holmes will be able to locate a man who is blackmailing her cousin. Because Holmes is now dead, the girls hire a second-rate detective, Mr. Porter, who works with an assistant named Peter Cartwright. To cut to the chase, Peter enlists Dora to help him solve a different mystery that might also involve her cousin's blackmailer. This is when the whole story goes off onto a completely different tangent with a new set of characters and the initial problems (Sherlock Holmes's death and the blackmailing) are totally shoved aside. The author is barely able to wrap things up by the end.

This book wasn't bad, and some of the writing was very beautiful, but an advanced reader would be able to pick apart its flaws. I would, however, recommend this book to anyone looking for a Victorian mystery or a strong female lead. There was very little romance and no cursing, so this novel is appropriate for young YA readers.

Leah Scheier says

Author's review:

Well, I wrote it. I thought of giving it a low star rating just to confuse people but I just couldn't do it. I love my little debut novel and I hope you will too.

Sheena says

Dora dreams of escaping her rule filled society life. She dreams of traveling to London and working to help solve mysteries. Dora also has a secret, she is the daughter of the famous detective Sherlock Holmes. She finds herself traveling to London to meet with him about a case involving her cousin, who is being blackmailed. When she arrives however she learns that Holmes has been killed in Switzerland. Now Dora must deal with the loss of a father she never knew and find her place in society. She meets a young apprentice named Peter Cartwright who works with another detective in London. Her cousin requests their help in finding the blackmailer and soon Dora finds herself pulled into not just her cousin's case but the case of a missing daughter of a Lord.

Dora must work to help solve the case of the missing girl while still helping her cousin. Soon she is pulled into a world of lies and games in which she must use all her knowledge as a detective to help find the missing girl and save her cousin's reputation and marriage. Will Dora be able to hide her identity long enough to find the truth or will she be discovered?

I absolutely loved this book! I am a huge fan of historical fiction especially those set during the Victorian Era. The characters were well written and I especially liked Dora and her need to prove that she is not just some pretty girl that is only good at dancing and going to parties. The story reminds me a lot of the Lady Emily series by Tasha Alexander in that it has a strong female lead in a role that was not considered proper in that day. I also love how the theme of secrets ran through out the book. Dora had her secret, Peter had his,

the blackmailer, the maid, etc. It brings a richness to the story and proves that things aren't always so they appear. As the book doesn't come out until June 26th I suggest that you place it on your to-read list. You won't be disappointed.

Amy says

I love Sherlock Holmes and Sherlock Holmes retellings.

If they are done right.

Enola Holmes is a wonderful series. The Baker Street Irregulars amused me as a kid. The Sherlockians was full of entertaining short stories.

But Sherlock Holmes as a Father? *Really??*

I just can't see it. I refuse to believe one of the greatest detectives in history was made into a melodramatic bachelor because the girl he loved married another man. No. It is too cliché.

Secret Letters really wasn't a bad book. In fact, as a mystery it was pretty good. I enjoyed it. As a *Victorian* mystery it was good - almost always spot on historically correct.

The romance really wasn't that bad either. Peter and Dora's relationship is really snappy.

Butttttttttt, even if I'm ignoring the whole Sherlock-Holmes-As-Absent-Dad-Of-The-Year, stuff about this book irritated me.

Like, mainly, Dora, our intrepid heroine. First off, she is way too modern. Why do people writing Victorian novels always seem to think their heroine must rebel against the norms of society? Why do they always dream of being equal and free from corsets? *Every single one of them?* Always? It's a pet peeve of mine, which might have been why I found it so irritating in Dora. If she had been properly brought up, I don't care if her genes run with genius, would she really have been so...modern?

The second thing that bugged me about this book was all the romances. Is there a single *married* female in the book who didn't love someone else before they got married? Oh, and how about this, is there a single female who was able to keep her legs crossed long enough to get married besides, like, Dora who I seriously doubt would have put up much of a protest? They're all carrying other men's kids! Gah!

And what point was there to refer to the maid planning to have an abortion? To be politically correct? To point out how modern Dora is, because she doesn't cling to the beliefs of her time?

This book was fairly blah for me. I mean, there was some good stuff in it. I'm not writing it off completely, but it wasn't fabulous. The whole book is an episode of *Who Is Your Daddy?* and after a while, the same plot line over and over is irritating.
