High jinks and high adventure fill every page of this exciting, panoramic novel set in Shakespeare’s time. Widge, our hero, is a young orphan indentured to a cold, unscrupulous master because the young boy has a special talent—the ability to write a secret shorthand. The master is bent on getting hold of the script of Hamlet at any cost, so it becomes Widge’s task to transcribe it—or else. This picaresque tale follows Widge as he hightails his way into the very heart of the Globe Theatre and Shakespeare’s company of players. As full of twists as a London alleyway, this entertaining novel is rich in period details, colorful characters, villainy, drama, and chuckles. Swordplay and wordplay share the stage with pure fun, all of which will keep readers rapt to the final scene.

My Personal Review:
This novel is a terrific example of historical fiction. The author blends true and fictional elements in a stirring and adventure filled story. The author ingeniously uses the spelling and language usage of the time to lend credibility to the characters and the setting. The characters presented are round and dynamic. The protagonist, Widge, undergoes the maturation of a typical adolescent attempting to form his or her identity. Other characters develop in their own way, each with their own distinct personality and desires. The author places authentic historical characters as well, Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth. These characters are also historically accurate. The queen’s white make up and Shakespeare’s personal tragedies are described precisely. The main conflict is an internal one, Widge must decide if he should steal the play or remain among his new friends. His predicament mirrors Hamlet’s ‘to be or not to be dilemma. This struggle is universal and relevant to modern day readers. This book will appeal to readers who are interested in the time period, Shakespeare, theater or an exciting, well-told story. Another high point of this book is the use of humor, both lowbrow slapstick and highbrow allusions and word play. The themes of choosing right from wrong, finding your identity, racism and gender issues are all explored throughout this rich novel. A teacher may use this book as an introduction for the life and times of
Shakespeare as well as any of his plays. The Shakespeare Stealer is a highly entertaining and rich look into the past.

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