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# Shakespeare's Apprentice

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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In some ways this is an old-fashioned novel, an historical romance and political adventure in direct descent from Geoffrey Trease's celebrated **Cue for Treason**. As in Trease, the book is set in Elizabethan England, and highlights both the theatres that glorified it and the dangerous political intrigues that threatened it. Shakespeare himself appears (in very plausible form, it must be said, as a trustworthy friend of the young) in both books, and the hard work and magic of acting, with its precious training in effective disguise, are central to both stories. But Trease was a pioneer in establishing young love and sexual attraction as fitting themes for children's fiction, and Veronica Bennett is the beneficiary of advances he made possible. **Cue for Treason** was mainly a tale of adventure, but **Shakespeare's Apprentice** is above all a love story.

Its background is the abortive rebellion by the Earl of Essex, which cost him his head. When Sam Gilburne, an apprentice in Shakespeare's company, and Lady Lucie Cheetham, Lord Essex's niece, fall in love at 16, the next few years of their lives are a constant dangerous struggle to contend first with the barriers of rank that obstruct their love, and then with the perils of the crazy rebellion itself. The risks and hardships of life in Tudor London are effectively caught, especially the tightrope walk of theatre companies as they seek to please both crowd and Court without political offence. But the heart of the book is the intensity and power of teenage love, and its victory against all odds. Only in romance (and not in Shakespeare's, either) does love overcome rigidities of rank and class in Elizabethan England. But **Shakespeare's Apprentice** is both romantic and realistic in depicting the mutual urgency of physical desire, and Trease would have approved the frank and suspenseful treatment of secret love in this accomplished and enjoyable story.

Running Order:

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