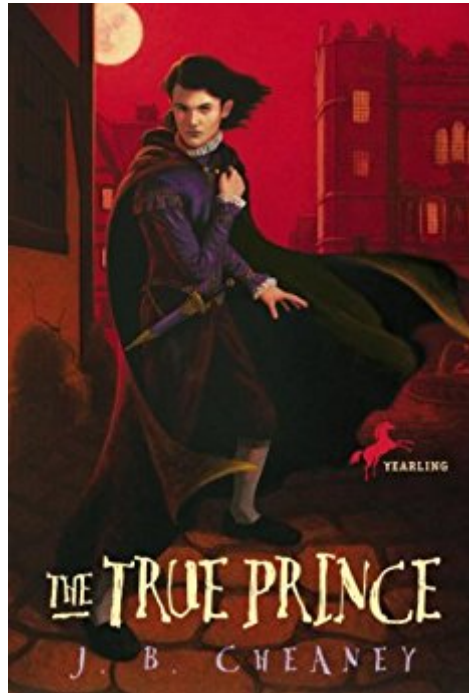




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The True Prince



Synopsis

Intrigue abounds both on and off the stage in this rollicking mystery set within Shakespeare's theater company. Kit Glover is London's finest boy actor. Audiences flock to see him portray imperious queens and scheming noblewomen. But off the stage Kit's manner is harder to make out. Now cool and disdainful, next fierce and angry, then madcap and bawdy his personality changes so rapidly and so often that fellow actor Richard is unsure which is the real Kit, or if his true nature is something else again. But Richard is certain of one thing: Kit is involved with some nefarious companions as much like young Prince Hal in Shakespeare's latest play, Henry IV. And Richard suspects that these low companions are behind a series of crimes that could cost the company its good standing and could cost Kit his head. And so, reluctantly, Richard allows himself to be drawn into the conspiracy to help his rival this fascinating, infuriating, troubled prince of a boy, teetering on the brink of becoming either a king . . . or a criminal. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

This is the second in JB Cheaney's series of novels about young Elizabethan apprentice actor, Richard Mallory (the first was the excellent, *The Playmaker*). It is even better than the first! Characters are drawn in great depth and subtlety, the story's a real rollercoaster of an intrigue, with disguised highwaymen, mysterious writers of 'putrid plays', hints of strange, malevolent magic, all part of the mix, and the atmosphere of Elizabethan theatre life and London streets is so vivid you can see it, smell it, touch it: and all done with a light, deft touch. A fabulous read. Don't miss it!

True Prince, a worthy, but complicated read. Its plot is a complex one, with a sub plot joining the fray every other chapter. So I'll do my best to give you the gist of it. The book is about London's finest acting troop, with none other than William Shakespeare, yes the real one. Their first problem is that their play house is taken away, so they set off to find another one. 50 pages later they accomplish this task, before anyone has a chance to catch their breath from hauling everything from their old theater to the new one; a bitter rivalry is born between Kit and Davy, two aspiring boy actors. Kit being London's finest. The only thing keeping Kit from killing little Davy, is Richard, the book's main character. While Richard is protecting Davy, he finds that the troop may be harboring a thief, Kit the main suspect. Apparently Cheaney felt that Shakespeare's cameo appearance needed a follow up, Robin Hood joins the melee of characters. Some of the flaws in this book were that it had too many characters, around 20 of them, some with the same first or last name. It was also kind of long and could've moved a little faster, even take out some bits. Now, don't get me wrong, I did like this book, it did have its redeeming qualities. Being an actor I liked this book just because it was about theater, but not the plays themselves, but what happened behind the curtain, where the real drama is. Also, Cheaney is a fantastic writer of realistic fiction. It seems so real and all of the many characters are well developed. My over all rating of this book is a four out of five stars, could've been shorted, but it was worth it

The book starts off with William Shakespeare's playgroup practicing a new play, "The House of Maximus", which happens to be one of the worst plays invented. A new player, Davy, arrives with a mysterious Welsh man. When the "Putrid Play", as it was nicknamed, was performed, the audience hated the play more than the players, showing their contempt by throwing their lunch leftovers. The next day, Kit, one of the best boy players in London, was in a court session for fooling around with Peregrine Penny, a corruptor of youth. Kit's bail was paid by a mysterious donor. After the court session, The troupe returned to the Theater to find it locked up by Giles Allen, the landlord. So, the

troupe moved to another theater named the Curtain. Many plays and lawsuits later, to defend the Welsh Boy, as Davy is called, Richard fights Kit in a boxing match. This is where Dacy is somewhat revealed as what he really is, a thief trying to frame Kit. "King Henry IV", a great play, is thought up and soon they are performing it in the Swan, another theater. They perform the play many times until the summer tour, where Kit leaves the company right before the tour. Upon returning, Richard is launched into solving a series of crimes committed by Kit and his theiving friends. Eventually, with the help of the detective's assistant named Bartholomew Finch and a penny gatherer named Starling Shaw, Richard is led to the Theater once more, where a kidnapping takes place and the mystery is solved. The previous posts did not lie. This is a great book and I recommend it to everyone who likes reading.

I recommend J. B. Cheaney's books "The Playmaker" and "The True Prince" to my community college literature classes for two reasons. First, these books have obviously been painstakingly researched because they give readers a "feel" for the time. Shakespeare emerged from and was nurtured by a vibrant, energetic (and a little dangerous) era, full of possibility. These times come alive in Cheaney's books. Second, in addition to the full-fleshed characters and engaging plots many young adult books have, Cheaney also gives readers something they don't experience as often: good style--"sparkling" one reviewer called it, and sparkling it is!

The True Prince is a wonderful book set in London somewhere in the 1600's. It is a mystery, wrapped in a play, tied in a cursed web of lies, seen through the eyes of an apprentice of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and set in the mystery of a young man's life, a man who never had a childhood. That mystery is Kit: Merchandise of his own father at six, actor of so many roles at eight, and, what is he now? Which role did he ever play as himself? Is he all of them? Or is he none?...

First may I say that the above 2 reviews do not exaggerate in the least! I have never read a book with such deftly drawn characters! The description also amazes me; I feel like I know Elizabethian London as if I lived there and I never get bored of reading more about it in this book, whereas normally I am dying for it to end so I can get on with the real story! Kit is a fascinating character, as are the rest. An amazing book, all in all. You must read it!

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