



In Plain Sight

Laura Langston

Reading level: 3.4

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Book Summary

Fifteen-year-old Megan “Cause Queen” Caliente is president of the political science club and likes to make her voice heard. But after the protest she organized on the Las Vegas Strip takes an unexpected turn, she is suddenly wishing she could disappear. When her mother comes to pick her up at the police station, Megan learns, to her horror, that her whole life has been a lie. Her father is a convicted terrorist, responsible for the deaths of more than two hundred people, and her mother has been living under an assumed name for fifteen years. Megan’s mom is taken away in handcuffs, and Megan is expected to return to her regular life under the supervision of her aunt. But everyone, students and teachers alike, is treating her differently now. Cruel accusations and gossip, as well as persistent reporters, follow her everywhere. Worried that she is destined to follow in her father’s footsteps, Megan, with the help of the charismatic Matt Mendez, the only person at school who hasn’t turned on her, decides to track down the father she thought was dead and get some answers.

Prereading Idea

Ask students to read the first paragraph of chapter 1 and to think about the impact of knowing your father is a terrorist. Then ask students to brainstorm with a partner reasons why it would be better to know or not to know. Have students justify their reasons and share their list with others in the class.

Connecting to the World—Writing and Research Ideas

- With a partner, ask students to research the uses of unmanned aircraft (drones) and the conflict surrounding their use. Have students make a chart listing the activity in one column, a column for the positive impact, and a column for the possible negative impacts. Students can present their findings to the class and then post their charts in the classroom.
- Increasing drastically in recent years, terrorism is truly a worldwide challenge. Ask students to research the effort being made around the world to stop terrorism. Have students work with a partner to select a country, investigate terrorism incidents within that country, and report to the class the plan the country has in place to end terrorism. After the students complete their research, have a class discussion about the groups' findings.
- In chapter 9, Matt tells Megan, “The nature-versus-nurture thing is one of the oldest arguments in history.” Ask students to research the nature-versus-nurture debate and to write an explanation of the psychology behind the debate. Students should also use an example(s) to support their explanation.

Connecting to the Text—Elements of the Novel*Theme*

The themes of family and friendship dominate the story. Ask students to write a thematic statement that reflects these ideas. Students should consider the sacrifices Megan's mother makes for her as well as the reaction of her friends when they find out the identity of Megan's father. Have students write their themes on a poster board and add quotes from the book, illustrations and real-world examples of the theme to the poster board. Have students share their poster boards in small groups and post in the classroom.

Characterizations

As a class brainstorm a list of qualities of true friendship. Then have students work with a partner to select one of Megan's friends and to create a chart of what the character says, what others say about the character, and what the character does that reveal whether or not the character is a true friend. Then have students create, practice and present a poem for two voices that characterizes the relationship between the character and Megan.

Connecting to the Students—Discussion Questions

1. Why do the protestors want to ground drones? How does the protest get out of hand?
2. How are Jenn and April and Megan different? What role do Jenn's and April's parents play in the way the girls respond to Megan's problem with her parents?
3. In chapter 1, why is Megan arrested at the protest? How does Matt support her with the protest?
4. In what ways does Megan's mother attempt to fly under the radar? How is she perceived by other people as a result of her attempts to hide?
5. In chapter 3, Megan responds to her mother's true identity by saying, “she's been hiding in plain sight.” How does this relate to the title of the book?

6. In what ways has Megan's life been altered as a result of her mother's lies and her father's actions?
7. What does Megan think when she sees Rebecca's Instagram post in chapter 5? How does Megan feel when she overhears the conversation between Rebecca and another girl in chapter 6?
8. Why is Megan stunned by her friends' attitude toward her when they discover who her father is? Why does Matt's reaction to the news surprise her?
9. Why does Megan want to see her father? Why does Matt help her? What prevents her from seeing her dad?
10. In chapters 11 and 12, what is Megan's reaction to the families of the victims her father killed in the bombing? What advice does one of the girls give Megan?

Writer's Craft

Strong verbs

Strong verbs move the action forward and help create an image in the reader's mind. Ask students to find the verbs listed below and to read the sentences for examples of powerful verb usage. Then ask students to find sentences in their own writing that they can revise. Ask them to share their "before" and "after" sentences with the class. Post the exemplar revisions as mentor texts for the students as they continue revising with strong verbs throughout the school year.

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| Saunter | ch. 1 | Settles | ch. 3 |
| Tolerates | ch. 1 | Tumble | ch. 3 |
| Scrapes | ch. 2 | Flinches | ch. 4 |
| Perched | ch. 3 | Clench | ch.11 |
| Clatters | ch. 3 | | |

Author Biography

Laura Langston is the award-winning author of over twenty internationally acclaimed books for teens and younger children. Her books have been translated into nine languages and routinely appear on readers' choice lists. A former journalist with the CBC, Laura lives in Victoria, BC, with her husband, son and two Shetland sheepdogs (aka Team Sheltie). Laura grew up in Vancouver, but spent five eye-opening and often frigid years living in Winnipeg.