

FOUND (THE MISSING:BOOK 1) BY MARGARET PETERSON HADDIX. SIMON & SCHUSTER CHILDREN'S PUBLISHING (NEW YORK NY), 2008. 314 PP HB \$15.99.

*Reviewed by Sharon Schnall*

Science fiction lovers will welcome the thriller *Found*, book number one of the new "The Missing" series. For those readers who have not embraced science fiction, this well-crafted story offers a wonderful entrée into the genre.

What makes *Found* such an interesting read is its effortless ability to answer unsettling questions regarding:

What if your life and all that has been comforting and familiar - your parents, origins, reason for being - were not what you knew them to be?

What if your sense of security and safety were overturned and shattered, in an instant, by a letter containing only six words?

Such is the case for the intelligent and thoughtful lead characters of Margaret Haddix's young adult thriller. Seventh grader Jonah Skidmore, his friend Chip Winston and Jonah's younger sister Katherine live in the fictitious town of Liston, Ohio.

Together, the three young sleuths confront family mistruths. Every chapter is plausibly conceived; most end with another revelation or discovery, compelling the reader to pursue the next chapter and the next chapter.

Jonah and Katherine's open-door parents are lovingly and bemusedly politically correct. Haddix filters their portrayals through Jonah's mostly-tolerant reactions. The parents painstakingly pounce on opportunities to explore, with Jonah, what they know regarding his adoption.

But that's the twist.

Despite his parents' best efforts to be truthful and forthright, what they know about their son has been deliberately misrepresented. Chip,





MARGARET PETERSON HADDIX

too, discovers his own unclear biographical truths; in contrast to the Skidmores, his parents hid critical information about his past.

Jonah and his friends and family will enter a world that reinforces their justified paranoia; where a U.S. government agency exudes a foreboding, menacing presence and adults who appear to have their best interests at heart, may not.

What makes the plot unsettling is Haddix's ability to take

ordinary moments and layer them with a menacing air. The characters are consistently appealing as they resourcefully resolve dangerous encounters that they cannot fully define or understand.

*Found* does not offer standalone content. The cliffhanger approach continues to the end. Rather than offer a clear ending with hints of uncertainty, the book closes with an abrupt transition or preview to the rest of the series' books.

This approach may not be considered a flaw by series aficionados who can patiently wait for the arrival of *Sent* (*The Missing: Book 2*), scheduled for an August 2009 release. For those readers seeking a clean ending, *Found* is a bit frustrating in its mid-action conclusion.

Margaret Peterson Haddix, a resident of Columbus, Ohio, has authored over 20 young adult fiction books including the "Shadow Children" science fiction series. A graduate of Miami University of Oxford, Ohio, she is the 2008 recipient of the Ohioana Book Award for juvenile literature.