

# The Reading Agency Reading Guide to: The Vanishing of Katharina Linden by Helen Grant

This great guide will help you present a title to a reading group. There are ideas to trigger in-depth discussion and information about some exciting online resources. There are six guides in total, one for each of the 2009 shortlisted titles.



**Title:** The Vanishing of Katharina Linden

**Format [eg: pb/hb]:** pb

**Pgs:** 352

**Publisher:** Puffin

**Price:** £6.99

**ISBN:** 978-0141325736



### About the author:

Helen Grant was born in London. She read Classics at St Hugh's College, Oxford, and then worked in marketing for ten years in order to fund her love of travelling. In 2001 she and her family moved to Bad Münstereifel in Germany, and it was exploring the legends of this beautiful town that inspired her to write her first novel. She now lives in Brussels with her husband, her two children and a small German cat.

### What's it about?:

Pia lives in the small German town of Bad Münstereifel where everybody knows everybody else's business and gossip is rife. When Pia's Grandmother is killed in a horrific and unlikely accident, Pia becomes known as the girl whose Grandmother exploded and is ostracised by her classmates. So Pia becomes friends with another outcast, Stefan, known to their other classmates as StinkStefan.

When a girl from their school mysteriously disappears, Stefan and Pia decide to investigate. The mystery deepens and more girls disappear. Pia and Stefan get sucked further in but little do they realise, their detective work will uncover things more horrifying than they ever dared imagine.

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**Talk about:**

1. "Small towns everywhere are rife with gossip, but in Germany they raise it to an art form." P1 How does the powerful sense of community affect Pia? Do you think it shapes the way she views the world around her?
2. Discuss the way the author builds suspense and narrative tension in the novel. To what extent are these integral to the mystery genre?
3. Pia and Stefan are thrilled and excited by their old friend Herr Schiller's scary stories. Discuss the way these tales are interwoven with the main narrative thread? How do you think they enhance the novel?
4. Pia is a feisty heroine. Talk about the way her strong personality helps to drive the narrative?

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**Online:**

To find out more about the Booktrust Teenage Prize, why not visit [www.bookheads.org.uk](http://www.bookheads.org.uk). If you'd like your reading group to be featured on the bookheads blog please email [kathleen.keaney@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:kathleen.keaney@readingagency.org.uk)

[www.groupthing.org](http://www.groupthing.org) is an online community around words and creativity. Young people can set up their own groups and start taking part for free. [www.groupthing.org](http://www.groupthing.org) will be running features and competitions on this year's prize. Why not get the young people in your library or school to join a group, or start their own!

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**More links:**

- [www.spinebreakers.co.uk/books/thevanishingofkatharinatalinden/reviews/Pages/Home.aspx](http://www.spinebreakers.co.uk/books/thevanishingofkatharinatalinden/reviews/Pages/Home.aspx)

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Booktrust is an independent charity dedicated to encouraging people of all ages and cultures to engage with books and the written word.

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The Reading Agency is an independent charity which inspires more people to read more.

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