



## THE VANISHING OF KATHARINA LINDEN

by Helen Grant

1. *'My life might have been so different had I not been known as the girl whose grandmother exploded.'*

What is it about Pia's bizarre family incident that imprints itself on everyone's memory? How does she feel about it? Why does it mark her out from the rest of her classmates?

Is there something funny about Pia's grandmother exploding? Does she find it amusing in any way?

2. In what way do German folklore and fairytales provide a backdrop to Pia's story? There's a disturbing element to this book that some may find upsetting. Is that true of many fairytales?

Are fairytales just stories for children, or can adults appreciate them too? Do you think adults might enjoy *The Vanishing of Katharina Linden*?

3. The story is set in a town in Germany called Bad Münstereifel. Why is the setting so important to the story? Are you surprised to learn that this is a real place? What do we learn about Germans and their way of life? Is it very different from the way we live in the UK?

Pia's mother is English not German. How does this give Pia a unique insight into the town? Does she like living in Germany as much as Pia does?

4. Throughout the book, the author uses German words and phrases. There is even a glossary at the back. Why does she use these phrases? Why doesn't she translate them? What does it add to the story? Does it enhance it?

5. How do Pia and StinkStefan come to be such close friends? What do they have in common? Would he be Pia's first choice for a potential partner in her crime investigation, do you think? What kind of detectives do they make?

6. Is Pia preoccupied by the disappearances of Katharina, Marion and Julia? Is she sometimes oblivious to other events going on around her? What is happening to her parents' marriage, for example? Should Pia be more concerned, do you think? Or is that the real reason why she becomes so engrossed in the case of the missing girls in the first instance?

7. What kind of friendship do Pia and Stefan have with Herr Schiller? Do they trust him? What do you think of the stories he tells the children? Do you find them frightening at all? Did you think that Herr Schiller was a possible suspect in the case of the missing girls? If not, why not? Can we always trust our own instincts?

8. Bad Münstereifel is rife with gossip. Is it just the adults who indulge in this practice? What about the children? Do you think this is unusual for a small town? In what way is the gossip that people like Frau Kessel tell different from Herr Schiller's stories? If the gossip is to be believed, Herr Duster is responsible for the abduction of the girls. Should we always believe what we hear?

9. *'It would have been good to be the girl who helped solve the Katharina Linden case, instead of the girl whose grandmother exploded?'*

Are these Pia's true motives for trying to solve the case? Why is this so important to her? What are Stefan's motives? Are they very different from Pia's?

10. The finale of the story is tense, gripping and macabre. Were you surprised by the fate of the missing girls? How would you have felt if you had been in Pia's place? Knowing Pia, do you think she would recover from her ordeal? Was she happy to move to England finally? What has she lost now? What kind of memories does she keep?

