

KIRKUS REVIEWS – DECEMBER 1, 2014

PIECES AND PLAYERS

Author: Blue Balliett

Illustrator: Brett Helquist

Review Issue Date: December 1, 2014

Online Publish Date: November 18, 2014

Publisher: *Scholastic*

Pages: 320

Price (Hardcover): \$17.99

Publication Date: March 31, 2015

ISBN (Hardcover): 978-0-545-29990-9

Category: Fiction

Thirteen-year-old amateur sleuths and best friends Tommy Segovia, Calder Pillay and Petra Andalee join forces with two new junior detectives to tackle a shocking art robbery at a Chicago museum in this sequel to *The Calder Game* (2010). When 13 priceless pieces of art disappear from the Farmer Museum in a heist Balliett patterns after the 1990 unsolved theft at Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Tommy, Calder and Petra are summoned by their former teacher Ms. Hussey to meet with museum trustee Mrs. Sharpe. Mrs. Sharpe introduces them to legally blind Zoomy Chamberlain (from *The Danger Box*, 2010) and neatnik Early Pearl (from *Hold Fast*, 2013). Mrs. Sharpe believes the five precocious kids will make "an extraordinary, unexpected, and understated team" to solve the mystery. Working during spring break, the young sleuths notice seemingly unrelated, reoccurring clues (lion symbols; prime numbers three, five and 13; young men wearing black leather jackets; Mother Goose rhymes), which amazingly come together. Closely studying the stolen art, the five problem-solvers discover that it sends a coded message, which eventually leads them to the surprising conclusion. Juggling multiple pieces of art and multiple suspect players (including an interfering ghost), Balliett again deftly merges mystery, art and friendship into another perplexing puzzler. Brain-teasing adventure for thinking kids. (author's notes) (Mystery. 8-12)