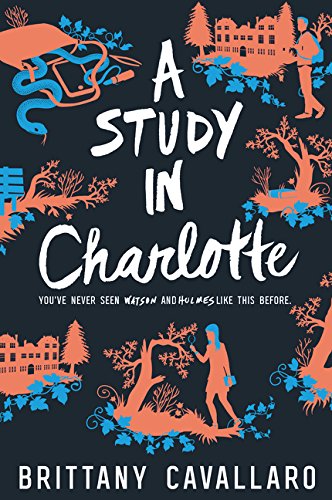
**Book Talk: *A Study In Charlotte***

Brittany Cavallaro



Brittany Cavallaro was born and raised in Springfield, Illinois in 1986. She went to Interlochen Arts Academy located in Interlochen, Michigan to study creative writing, which she continues to do. After attending Interlochen Arts Academy, she earned her BA from Middlebury College. There she was the founding editor-in-chief of *Devil’s Lake* and received the David and Jean Milofsky Prize in Creative Writing. In-between teaching classes at local high schools and undergraduates at the University of Wisconsin, she would pick up odd jobs here and there. Her favorite job was working as a hat salesgirl. Other than writing her book, *A Story In Charlotte*, she has two other books to complete the trilogy, *The End of August* and *A Case For Jamie*. Cavallaro also spends time writing poetry. Her most recent poetry collection, *Unhistorical*, is coming out sometime in 2019. Her first collection, *Girl-King*, was published by the University of Akron Press in February 2015.

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*A Study In Charlotte*, is a fun spin off of the original Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. The two teen descendants, Charlotte Holmes and Jamie Watson, end up going to the same boarding school in Connecticut. Jamie has always been curious about Charlotte due to their family’s infamous history together. Charlotte, no doubt, has inherited some of Sherlock’s unpredictability and some of his vices. When a student that they both have history with is found dead in his dorm room, they both have to team up to prove their innocence. They then soon find out that no one is safe and the only people they are able to trust are themselves.

*http://www.brittanycavallaro.com/a-study-in-charlotte/*

**Quotes**

“The place where she could hide from me. I called for her hoarsely, as she cut through the small stand of trees in the middle of the quad, and though people turned to look, she plowed straight on ahead. I put on a burst of speed and with a lunge caught her by the am and whirled her around. She shook my hand off with a snap. ‘Don’t you *ever* touch me without my explicit permission.’ ‘Look,’ I said, ‘I am not saying that you killed him. I’m saying that someone wants me to think that. Wants the world to. Why can’t you tell if he’s dead? Is August dead?’ ‘You thought it,’ she said. ‘I watched you think it. That I killed him.’ ‘Why can’t you just *tell* me—‘ I must’ve stepped forward; she must have stepped back. I was pressing her father into the trees as if every step brought me that closer to the answer. I was so caught up in finding out that I missed what was written all over her face. I was so used to her fearlessness that I couldn’t recognize her fear. But he was afraid. Of me. Dobson has loomed over her too. Holmes took another step backward, and stumbled over the little freshman girl’s body.” (pg. 116-117)

For some context, this is the night of homecoming, so Jamie and Charlotte end up going to the dance together since everyone else at their school believe they are murderers. During the dance, Jamie ends up losing Charlotte so he goes looking for her. He then finds her outside clearly shaken up. When he starts to probe and ask questions, Charlotte ends up bolting and Jamie chases after her. Once he finally catches up to her, his stance and his demeanor triggers her. In the beginning of the year, Charlotte was raped by the now dead Dobson. Dobson was the popular school jock, who took advantage of Charlotte when she wasn’t sober. During this quote, you can see that Jamie is triggering her and she isn’t taking to it well. Jamie is trying to find the thin line between trying to help a friend and protecting someone he truly loves. He believes that Charlotte isn’t being as transparent with him as he is with her. In this quote, you can see that Jamie truly loses himself in trying to figure out Charlotte’s past, even if it doesn’t help anything in the future. Jamie never thinks about the possibility that Charlotte isn’t telling him for his own safety. He trusts Charlotte, but continuously has this lingering thought in the back of him mind that she may have ulterior motives. It’s the beginning of Jamie’s character development throughout the book.

“’I’m pretty good at reading you, you know,’ I told. ‘That might be true,’ she said gamely. ‘But did you know that my father worked for the M.O.D. for fourteen years before the Kremlin got wind of a scheme of his and tried to have him assassinated? Or that, growing up, I had a cat called Mouse? She’s white and black and very fussy, and once the neighbor boy tried to drown her in a bucket. My mother hates her. Milo joined up with M15 at age seventeen. No, that’s false. Mile runs the world’s largest private security company. Or no, actually, he’s an enfant terrible preparing a hostile takeover of Google. He’s unemployed. He’s a complete tosser. For years he was my favorite person in the world.’ I held my hand out rather stupidly between us; my thumb hadn’t moved. I’d spent too much time imagining what her life was like, before me, so I drank it all these facts—even the contrary ones – as if they were water. ‘Pay attention to my face, Watson. Not my words. Listen to my tone. How am I sitting? Where am I looking?’ She snapped her finger. ‘I own three dressing gowns. I dislike guns, they cheapen confrontations. I first took cocaine at age twelve, and sometimes I take oxycodone when I’m miserable. When I met you, my initial thought was that my parents had set it up. No, it was that you were *dreamy*.’ Grinning, I put my thumb up; she pushed it back down. ‘No, I thought, finally what someone wants from me, I can give them. I know how to play to an audience. I liked you. I thought you were another chauvinistic bastard who thought I couldn’t take care of myself.’ ‘All true,’ I said, quietly, before she could continue. ‘All of it. At one point or another, including the business about you brother. He’s done all those things, been all those things. You thought all those things about me.’ ‘Explain your method’ Holmes pulled a cigarette out of her pocket and lit it. ‘Because, somewhere in that brain of yours, you’ve decided I should know more about you, but you don’t want to do it out right. No, it can’t be that simple, you’re Charlotte Holmes. You have to do it sideways, and this is the most sideways approach you could dream up.’” (pg. 178-179)

Jamie is finally feeling like he belongs here. He is finally feeling close to Charlotte. For the longest time he thought that he got thrown into this mess by accident but he is finally finding his feet and is getting more confident in not only himself but his relationship with Charlotte. For the longest time he had no idea if she was using him for some weird unknown reason, but he is feeling much closer to Charlotte which is helping him trust her. How was Jamie supposed to trust someone he knows nothing about? Having Charlotte open up to him, even if it was through some sort of game, helped him get some traction on the true meaning of why Charlotte was still with him. This is also shows the character development with Charlotte in the fact that she is opening up to Jamie, even if it was somewhat unintentional. Charlotte is showing a side of her that not many people are able to see, and Jamie sees that here. He understands that even if she turned it into a game for him, this was something he could not take for granted. It also gives the readers a new side of Charlotte that hasn’t been seen before. She somewhat becomes more relatable and honest to us.

“’What have you taken? I [Jamie] asked. ‘Oxy. Slows it all down.’ She smiled. ‘Done with coke. Hate coke. Am I disappointing you?’ ‘No.’ ‘Liar,’ she said, with sudden venom, ‘You expect impossible things, and I refuse to deliver, Can’t do it. Won’t.’ […] I wished, for the first time, that I’d done something with my years at Highcombe other than read novels an swoon over icy blonde princesses who’d never touch anything harder than pot. I could have gained some practical knowledge. She might be dying, I thought, and I had no way to know; the responsible thing would be to call the police, or an ambulance, or at the very least tell my father and let him sort it out. I didn’t. They’d write that on my tombstone, I thought: *Jamie Watson. He didn’t.*” (pg. 248)

This is a significant part of the novel because the entire story Jamie is having this internal struggle between himself. He continuously doubts himself and his actions. He never knows what to do in situations and so instead of acting he does nothing. He never really feels at home at the boarding school especially since it started out with him becoming the number one suspect in a murder case. Jamie is constantly lonely even though he lives with a roommate, uses communal bathrooms, and eats with every student attending the boarding school. During this part, Jamie found Charlotte high off oxycodone and he has no idea what he should do. Charlotte is the most important thing in his life, yet he is paralyzed with the internal battle inside his head. Never knowing what to do is literally killing Jamie. He has so much potential but never is able to act on it, and this is what makes him feel constantly inferior to Charlotte. He looks up to her in a role model kind of way but doesn’t realize that she does the same for him. Charlotte feels like she needs to continuously gain Jamie’s approval when she already has it. It’s a complicated relationship between them, and this quote makes both of their insecurities shine.

**How hard is *A Study In Charlotte*?**

*Lexile Level*: HL750L

Lexile gives this book a HL750L. Some young adult books written at lower level is given a ‘high-low’ rating since the vocabulary isn’t as hard as some other books that 7th graders or even 12th graders are reading. I would agree with this because it’s written from a point of view of a boy in a preparatory school. There are some harder topics that are brought up in the story such as, rape, death, and drugs but I feel that those are topic that should be talked about during that age.

*ATOS Reading Level*: 5.3

I would also agree with this because this books grade range is about 7th grade to 12th grade. The word count for this book is 84,088. Many websites agreed that teens about the age of 13 and up are able to read this book. I agree with that but I would add that any younger student would be able to read this book, but it just may be a little long for them.

**Exeter Qualities**

**Exciting plot**

The entire book is following Charlotte and Jamie and having them solve a murder mystery that was framed to look like they did it. It is full of twists and turns and it’s extremely fast pace. This would attract boys to this book because it contains explosions, chases, and confrontations between enemies.

**Characters who go beyond typical experiences**

Charlotte struggles with her addiction to drugs and tries to keep it a secret. Jamie is then faced with trying to help Charlotte with her addiction without pushing her away. It can relate to teens who feel as if there are dealing with addiction or if they have a friend that they are trying to help. Charlotte also is internally dealing with her traumatic experience of being taken advantage of and raped. She hasn’t been able to talk to anyone about it and as the story progresses it becomes more apparent in her and Jamie’s relationship.

**Themes that allow the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues**

This quality pairs well with how the characters go beyond typical experiences. This can reach out to many other teens dealing with similar issues.

**Why teach *A Study In Charlotte*?**

I feel as if this book brings many different topics to the table. I would be able to talk to the class about addiction, sexual assault, and making difficult decisions. During this time in teens live, they are caring more about what their peers think and would do almost anything to feel included. It’s very easy for teens to start using drugs recreationally but it turns into a very slippery slope, which many of them may not realize. Talking about the problems with addiction and drugs with the class, could be paired with how taking drugs can lead to making poor choices that can really hurt other people and yourself. In the book, Charlotte was raped while she was high on drugs and was not in the right state to give consent. Being able to talk to teens about consent and how to give or how to receive it can sometimes be uncomfortable but it’s extremely important. Even though these topics are heavy, it can be split up with lighter lessons on maybe what the class thinks will happen next in the book.