

MARGARET PETERSON HADDIX

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Among the Hidden: Frequently Asked Questions

Note: My answers may contain some spoilers for the book—please don't read this if you haven't finished the book!

How did you get the idea for *Among the Hidden*?

I first started thinking about *Among the Hidden* when my husband and I were trying to decide whether to have a third child, or whether to stop with two. All the reasons we could come up with for having or not having another baby seemed entirely subjective, more emotional than rational—except the possibility that the world was overpopulated, and it might be irresponsible to have more than two kids. I remember thinking in frustration one night, “Well, if overpopulation were that bad of a problem, there’d be a law, that nobody could have a third child!” My next thought was, “What if there was a law like that?” I knew instantly that I had a good idea for a book, regardless of what my husband and I decided.

Was there ever a two-child rule?

I made up that rule, but it's not entirely far-fetched. For many years, China has had a more stringent law: families there are limited to one child. But there are some exceptions to that rule, and the circumstances and enforcement methods in China are different from those in my book. (You could probably tell that *Among the Hidden* wasn't set in China.) When I was researching my book, I read a lot about China's efforts at population control—and efforts in other countries--but I was not trying to depict any of those situations exactly. I wanted to be able to imagine the world of *Among the Hidden* in my own way.

What is the setting of *Among the Hidden*?

You may have noticed that I never actually gave an exact time and place for the story. I didn't just forget to—I did this on purpose. I wanted readers to think about whether this is something that could happen in the United States, if there were droughts and famines and an extreme change in the government. But I didn't want to come out and say that, partly because all the explanation would have bogged down the story, and partly because I thought a lot of people would think, "Nope, that could never happen here!" and then dismiss the whole book. So I wanted to make readers think.

I could have given an exact year—I was picturing everything as happening twenty or thirty years in the future. But it's always bothered me that the book 1984 lost some of its effect after 1984 came and passed, so I didn't want to be that precise.

Why did you kill Jen?

I absolutely did not want to. I really liked Jen, and liked her more and more the further I got into the book. In fact, I tried thinking of every possible plot twist to save her. But I couldn't figure out a way to make any of those plot twists seem realistic. Given her personality—fearless, rebellious, outraged by injustice—and given the way her society was—totally restrictive and controlling—I didn't see how she could survive.

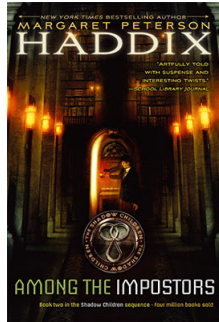
Are you going to write more books for the Shadow Children series?

When I originally wrote *Among the Hidden*, I had no intention of writing more than just the one book about shadow children and Population Police. The other six books I wrote in the series—*Among the Impostors*, *Among the Betrayed*, *Among the Barons*, *Among the Brave*, *Among the Enemy* and *Among the Free*—gave me the chance to explore other characters and other tangents. But I wanted to stop before I became repetitious. So *Among the Free* will stay as the last book. I shifted to writing another series, *The Missing*, instead.

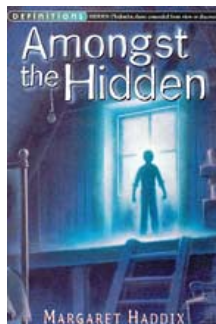
Will *Among the Hidden* ever be a movie?

There has been a lot of interest in that possibility over the years, but at the moment there's nothing definite to report. Stay tuned!

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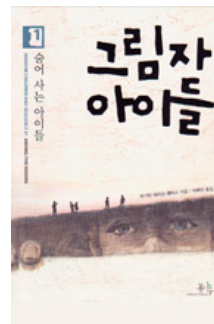
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