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WKU professor and author David Bell cracks New York Times bestseller list

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Bestselling author and Western Kentucky University professor of English David Bell speaks about his novel, “The Finalists,” on July 12 at a book discussion at the main branch of the Warren County Public Library.

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David Bell is a Western Kentucky University English professor, prolific adult fiction writer and most recently, a New York Times bestselling author.

Bell’s most recent novel, “She’s Gone,” came out in November. It follows the story of 17-year-old Hunter Gifford, who wakes up in the hospital after a car accident

only to realize that his girlfriend, Chloe Summers, is missing. He soon finds himself as a prime suspect.

The novel is Bell's first entry into young adult suspense, though he originally planned it for the adult suspense genre.

"As I was working on the idea, I realized that the stuff that was happening when the main character was in high school was more interesting than the stuff that was happening when he was an adult," Bell said. "So I thought, well maybe this could be a young adult book."

Bell began writing in fall 2019 and completed the novel right when the pandemic was starting. Because of the COVID delay, it took about a year to find a publisher.

But the book's success seems to have been worth the postponement. The early reviews were promising, and "She's Gone" has a 4.3-star ranking on Barnes & Noble and a 4-star rating on Amazon.

"I thought it would do OK, but I didn't expect it to sell this much," Bell said. "My publisher did a very good job of getting the book out, especially in Barnes & Noble. So I've been just pleasantly surprised, almost shocked at how well it sold."

It helped that the book was released to stores in November, just in time for holiday shopping, Bell said. It's on sale for \$5 at Barnes & Noble online and in person now until the end of December.

Nobody knows exactly how books are selected for New York Times' bestseller lists, Bell said. Different categories have different ways of measuring, which could include methods like sampling bookstores across the country to get a representative portrait of which books are most successful.

It's Bell's first time on the list.

"It's the gold standard in publishing; they go out of their minds if you're on the New York Times," he said.

Bell is under contract to write two more young adult standalone novels, one of which he has already begun writing.

He said the second book, which is scheduled for a 2024 release, is a cross between *Fight Club* and *Footloose* set in a wealthy town where high schoolers aren't allowed to drive. The story begins when a new kid comes into town and shakes things up by starting a Midnight Driving Club.

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