



Good Reads: Wells Cathedral School, Somerset

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Good Reads

Byline:

Reviews from pupils of **Wells Cathedral School**, Somerset.

Chosen by Year 8 pupils (12/13 year olds) from Wells Cathedral School, Somerset.

Thanks to Sylvia Evans, School Librarian.<!--break-->

The Opposite of Chocolate

Julie Bertagna, Macmillan Young Picador, 0 330 39746 X, £4.99 pbk

When I saw the cover of the book in our school library I was intrigued by it. The cover is covered in Smarties with one Jelly Baby. I wondered what this book could be about ? could it be about chocolate? But as the saying goes, 'Don't judge a book by its cover?.'

The book is about a 14-year-old girl called Sapphire who is pregnant. She is faced with aborting the baby or keeping it. Pressured by her family, she meets Gilbert in the forest one night. (Gilbert is an arsonist who starts fires at people's houses.) He too exerts a different kind of pressure. Will she make the right decision?

This book was included on the Carnegie Medal longlist ? but should have been on the shortlist. I really enjoyed it, but I would class it as appropriate for girls more than boys!

Charlotte Davies

The Amulet of Samarkand

Jonathan Stroud, Doubleday, 0 385 60599 4, £12.99 hbk, Corgi, 0 552 55029 9, £5.99 pbk

I found this book to be a rewarding and satisfying read. Although rather lengthy, which may be slightly off-putting, the plot is so gripping, tense and exhilarating, you will be glad there is so much to read! The plot is cleverly structured, with excitement and a fast pace to hold interest. The author's style is amusing and gripping and the settings are excellent, especially the idea of a modern-day London in a magical world. The characters are unique and interesting, especially the djinni (genie), who gives us a unique viewpoint into the story. The footnotes are a funny companion to the text, providing humorous additions to the unfolding events, but (this is my only criticism) I feel they are derived from Terry Pratchett's explanatory footnotes. This is a highly enjoyable book, better perhaps than even the mighty Potter in all aspects. I want the sequel now!

Tom Watson-Follett

A Gathering Light

Jennifer Donnelly, Bloomsbury, 0 7475 7063 9, £6.99 pbk

In 1906, Grace Brown is dragged from the depths of Big Moose Lake. Everybody believes that Grace and a gentleman, Carl Graham, both drowned while boating. Only Mattie Gokey, a dreamy teenager who lives with her three sisters and her father, knows the truth; she has Grace Brown's letters in her possession. As she reads them, she unravels the layers of secrecy that surround the mysterious death of Grace Brown.

I thought that **A Gathering Light** was a wonderful book. It had an exciting plot and the characters were interesting and well-described. My favourite character was Mattie; when she read Grace Brown's letters she seemed to really understand how Grace felt. I admired the way she coped with her family responsibilities, her ambition to write books and her first romance. My favourite part was when Mattie was reading one of Grace's letters and she discovered a shocking secret which answered all her questions about the boating tragedy. Why did Grace ask Mattie to burn all her letters? Why did Carl Graham take Grace boating? Why was Grace so desperate for Carl to take her away from her family and marry her? Now Mattie knew. I recommend that you read this book and find out the answers for yourself.

Alice Penfold

The House of the Scorpion

Nancy Farmer, Simon & Schuster, 0 689 83770 4, £5.99 pbk

?CLONE ? A laboratory produced exact copy of one thing or being.? Clones are often thought of as dangerous ?biting? creatures. Matteo Alacrain is a clone, and to most people around him he is not a boy but a freak ? a monster. However, for El Patron, owner and Lord of a land called Opium, Matt's being is something as precious as life itself. The Lord's power-hungry family threatens Matt's existence as he struggles to understand who, or rather what, he is. The mindless slaves of El Patron ? brain-dead ?eejits? serving in the poppy-fields, and the vast army of strong, mean bodyguards surround Matt's everyday life. From the living dead in the land of Opium, Matt seeks escape, But he is marked by his difference in ways he himself does not recognise, and the guarantee of freedom is not given.

This vivid, heart-stopping and mind-bending adventure is a gripping and thrilling read. The sinister grasping cast intrigues each reader to continue, winding their single special ways into the mind and pulling the book-reading victim into the world of the land of Opium.

Emma Bennett

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