



A Twist of Fortune

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

A Twist of Fortune is a vivid, enthralling historical adventure by an author so skilled in the field that she makes it look easy. Our young narrator Sam Pargeter lives a humble but happy life in the English countryside. All is well until his father loses his job on the local farm and leaves for America, hoping to make his fortune. Within a few short months, his family have lost contact with him, and Sam's mother falls ill and dies. Sam and his younger sister and brother are on their own.

So begins a series of trials and tribulations for the three children; not for nothing is the book called **A Twist of Fortune**. Sam and his siblings experience all the vicissitudes of life for the Victorian poor but the nod to **Oliver Twist** is entirely deliberate too. **Oliver Twist** is Sam's favourite book, he keeps hold of his copy even when they've lost everything else. And the children's adventures echo those of Dickens' hero. The characters they encounter - feckless husbands, waspish wives, generous benefactors - could have stepped straight out of the pages of Dickens; Sam and co come across their own Artful Dodger, and remain charmed by him even when he's picked their pockets. Mitchelhill even engineers a meeting for the children with Dickens himself. He tries to help them, unsuccessfully it turns out.

Fast-moving and varied, each chapter puts the children in a different dangerous predicament, often finishing on a cliff-hanger. It's full of humour as well as adventure, and of course, the ending will move the sentimental (such as this reader) to tears. Dickens would have approved! The book is packed with details of Victorian life but above all gives a proper sense of what Dickens' world was like. It should inspire young readers to read Oliver's story after Sam's.

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