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Airborn

Mary Chapman

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Oppel, Kenneth. *Airborn*. Eos, 2004. ISBN 0060531800. \$16.99. 368 pp.

Reviewer: Mary Chapman

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Adventure stories; Fantasy fiction; Science fiction;

Subject: Airships--Juvenile fiction; Pirates--Juvenile fiction; Imaginary creatures--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

Airborn is set sometime in the past when airships, rather than jets, would have been the mode of transportation for carrying passengers in the air across oceans. Fifteen-year-old Matt Cruse, born on an airship and happiest when he is floating in the air, is a cabin boy on the Aurora, a luxury airship. Matt plays a key role in the daring rescue of a stranded balloon and its dying pilot while crossing the ocean. Before he dies, the elderly balloonist tells Matt about fantastic, beautiful creatures he encountered during his ill-fated flight. Matt dismisses the balloonist's story as ravings of a dying man until a year later when he meets the man's beautiful, head-strong, granddaughter Kate. Matt finds himself as Kate's accomplice while she tries to prove her grandfather was not mad by finding the creatures he discovered before dying.

Oppel's novel is full of adventures and thrills including air pirates, threatening fantastical flying creatures never seen by humans, flying contraptions of many varieties and, of course, the airships themselves. There's even a bit of romance. The story keeps you on the edge of your seat and flows almost like a movie. Matt, Kate, Captain Walken, the pirates, and crew are well written characters. *Airborn* would appeal to both boys and girls in the 6th through 8th grades.