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Welcome Home or Someplace Like It

Mary Chapman

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Agell, Charlotte. *Welcome Home or Someplace Like It*. Illustrated by Charlotte Agell. Henry Hold and Company, 2003. ISBN 0805070834. \$16.95. 230 pp.

Reviewer: Mary Chapman

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction;

Subject: Maine--Juvenile fiction; Friendship--Juvenile fiction; Family--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

Aggie B. Wing wants to be an artist when she grows up. Right now she's thirteen and starting on "Notebook #27" of her diaries where she tells us that she and her sixteen-year-old brother Thorne have been dropped off by their romance novelist mother in Ludwig, Maine (population 159) to spend the summer with their quirky ninety-one-year-old grandfather. Their mother is leaving them on their own yet again, while she goes off to Niagara Falls or where ever to do "research" for her next novel. While Thorne sticks to his room listening to "techno-rock", Aggie tries to make the best of her situation and writes in her notebook about what it's like to live in a tiny town with only a Quickstop, an unusual church called Our Lady of the Wilderness, and a mysterious island named Cat Island. Aggie makes a best friend, learns some secrets about the island and about her mother, and discovers she has a special way with chickens.

On the one hand, this is a typical young adult novel about teens who are victims of divorce. Thorne and Aggie's father left the family long ago and doesn't keep in touch, and their mother doesn't seem to be able to provide a stable home life. Thorne of course is moody, smokes, and gives his sister a hard time. Aggie of course is developing into a young woman, and we must have the typical mention of her developing body compared to others of her age. On the other hand, Agell makes the story fun to read by sharing Aggie's point of view through her numbered notebooks/diaries. Aggie is a charming, humorous writer as well as artist and delights in describing her surroundings and experiences in word and picture. Her perspective of small town Maine, making new friendships, trying to support and love her mother, and her attempts to understand Thorne and convince him to stop smoking is touching. This book is recommended for children twelve and older.