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Wild Ride to Heaven

Lillian Heil

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Watts, Leander. *Wild Ride to Heaven*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 2003. ISBN 0618268057. \$16.00. 169 pp.

Reviewer: Lillian H. Heil

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Significant Shortcomings

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Frontier and pioneer life--Juvenile fiction; Disfigured persons--Juvenile fiction; Fathers and daughters--Juvenile fiction; Albinos and albinism--Juvenile fiction; Brothers--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

A girl, Hannah, with one green eye and the other a milky white is sold by her money-hungry father to two coarse, uneducated brothers as a servant for a year. The story is set in about 1835 downriver from Lake Ontario.

Watts' writing holds the readers interest but there are too many logical and psychological problems for supposed realistic fiction. The heroine, Hannah, meets an albino boy who is protected by two huge wild boars. Such a friendship would only work in a nonfiction account or in a fantasy story where animals frequently have human characteristics. Second, the rattlesnake battle is not logical. Rattlers do not go after humans. They use their rattlers as a warning but would never stalk a person as the large snake stalks Hannah. Third, Hannah's mother is supposed to have left her family to join the Mormons when Hannah was about two or three. Hannah was told her mother became one of Joseph Smith's wives. Polygamy became part of the church around 1835 but by that time Hannah is about fourteen and her mother must have left the family in about 1822 or 1823. The Mormon Church did not exist until 1830. Finally, at the conclusion of the story Hannah's father saves her from the brutish brothers, which is a sudden change for a man who has been going off on wild goose chases for money as long as Hannah can remember. His return to sanity is unbelievable because no reasons are given for the change. Hopefully such a fluent writer will check his facts more carefully in his next book.