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# The Tail of Emily Windsnap

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Kessler, Liz. *The Tail of Emily Windsnap*. Illustrated by Sarah Gibb. Candlewick Press, 2004. ISBN 0763624837. \$15.99. 224 pp.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy Fiction;

Subject: Mermaids--Juvenile fiction; Swimming--Juvenile fiction; Houseboats--Juvenile fiction; Neptune (Roman deity)--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

*The Tail of Emily Windsnap* is a fantastic tale of Emily, who discovers a very important but alarming thing when she goes to her first swimming class in seventh grade. After plunging into the water, she feels something very strange happening to her legs. They grow together and in their place appear a fish-like tail! Emily is a mermaid! Hastily, getting out of the pool, she discovers that she is only a part-time mermaid - on land she is completely human! How did this come to be? Does her father, who left her and her mother when she was a little girl, have anything to do with the mystery? Why does she feel so drawn to water? Emily must find out, and find out she does by secretly leaving the security of their boat, "The King of the Sea," and taking a series of daring romps in the ocean. She meets Shona, a mermaid, who tells her about sirens, mermaid school, sunken ships, and King Neptune. Emily also finds out why strange Mr. Beeston, the lighthouse keeper, always hangs around her mother. The happy ending? You'll want to read it and find it out for yourself.

Except for one superfluous word of profanity early in the book, the text is readable and the story line intriguing. The characters are realistic and the fantasy details are believable. Although this is Kessler's first book, her characters' thoughts and conversations are natural and understandable. The colored book cover and the small black-and-white pen-and-ink illustrations of mermaids, seahorses, and other seascapes throughout the book add to the whimsical nature of the story. I think this would be a fun read-aloud book for grades 4-6 or for a family.