



2004

The Illmoor Chronicles: The Ratastrophe Catastrophe

Rachel Wadham

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Wadham, Rachel (2004) "The Illmoor Chronicles: The Ratastrophe Catastrophe," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 25 : Iss. 1 , Article 16.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol25/iss1/16>

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Stone, David Lee. *The Illmoor Chronicles: The Ratastrophe Catastrophe*. Hyperion, 2004. ISBN 0786851287. \$16.99. 288 pp.

Reviewer: Rachel Wadham

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Rats--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

When the unremarkable shepherd boy Diek Wustapha is invaded by an evil spirit that gives him the power to charm living things with his flute, he finds the perfect test of his powers in the town of Illmoor which has been infested by a plague of giant rats. In true fairy tale form, Diek leads the rats to their death but is ultimately left unrewarded by the town's ineffective leader, the Duke of Illmoor, who has no money in the coffers to pay. Seeking revenge, Diek is persuaded by the evil spirit to kidnap the town's children. With angry parents snapping at his heels, the Duke commissions misfit mercenaries, Groan the Giant, Gordo the dwarf, Tambor the would-be sorcerer, and Jimmy an aspiring thief, to find the children and destroy Diek, which they do in their own bumbling style.

The Ratastrophe Catastrophe is a wonderful nontraditional take on the traditional story of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. Diek and the outrageous cast of characters add spice to this intermittently dark story. The plot is fun and vigorous but is not evenly paced with scenes jumping back and forth between characters in an irregular pattern. Purists will find no real theme or moral to this story, but the humorous situations and language provide great entertainment value in the novel. Teen fans of Terry Pratchett and Douglas Adams will enjoy this book and anticipate the next installment of the Illmoor Chronicles.