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More Perfect than the Moon

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MacLachlan, Patricia. *More Perfect than the Moon*. Joanna Cotler Books, 2004. ISBN 0060275596. \$15.89. 80 pp.

Reviewer: Irene Halliday

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Babies--Juvenile Fiction; Mothers and daughters--Juvenile Fiction; Frontier and pioneer life--Juvenile Fiction; Book--Reviews;

Life is never without change on the Witting family farm, home of *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. Baby Cassie, now 8 years old, is given the responsibility of keeping the family journal. She follows family members around, observing what they do, secretly listening to conversations, and often embellishing their activities with creative fiction. As she listens and watches, Cassie begins to be afraid for Mama. She follows her constantly, sensing that something is different--something is wrong with Mama. Her fears seem to be confirmed one morning when Mama faints and Papa hurriedly takes her to Dr. Sam in town. However, when the "something wrong" turns out to be the expectation of a new baby, Cassie is most unhappy! She tells Papa that she will not speak to or look at the baby. She writes mean things about the "terrible baby" in the journal. Soon a new fear begins to grow inside of Cassie; the fear that Mama will die giving birth just like Anna and Caleb's mother did. When the time actually arrives, Papa is in town and Cassie is able to assist Mama until the neighbor's wife arrives to take over. Cassie is surprised by her own feelings as she is allowed to be the first to hold the "terrible baby," her tiny, new brother, a gift "more perfect than the moon."

An invitation to spend time once again with the Witting family is most welcome. As with the other three *Sarah* novels, day-to-day realities of rural family life in earlier times are portrayed with gentleness, warmth and wisdom. Universal human feelings are respected and honored whether experienced by adults or children. MacLachlan's poetic style and flowing dialogue find honest and often humorous expression through the thoughts and journal entries of the creative and unique Cassie, surrounding the reader in the love of the Witting family.