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Rosoff, Meg. *Meet Wild Boars*. Illustrated by Sophie Blackall. Henry Holt, 2005. ISBN 0805074880. 15.95. 40 pp.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Shortcomings

Genre: Humorous stories;

Subject: Wild boar--Juvenile fiction; Behavior--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Rosoff has created another horrid story with characters that overflow with boorish, anti-social behavior and gross habits. This time the audience isn't young adults (*How I Live Now*) but pre-school and primary school age children. Rosoff's boars are dirty, smelly, bad-tempered and rude. Horace will "be rude to your pets;" Morris will "stick his snout up your jumper;" Boris will "have a tantrum" and blame you. Doris is a glutton. Don't be fooled by a sweet baby boar: all boars are bad. The Anti-defamation League for Boars would have a field day.

The gross humor is banal and predictable--a catalog of "what not to do" in civil society. Rosoff attempts to provide the structure necessary in narrative for beginning readers. However, her penchant for non-conventional punctuation results in a 38-word sentence with only a period and multiple comma omissions from sentences with series and subordinate clauses. The formatting of the text on the pages helps to compensate for the missing punctuation. Artist Blackall employed gouache on watercolor paper for her illustrations and the good judgment to depict the boar Morris rubbing his snout on top of the jumper of a horrified young girl and not under it. For those libraries and families who are eager to encourage boorish behavior, purchase *Meet Wild Boars*. For those who would prefer engaging humor, *Knuffle Bunny* (2004) by Mo Willems and *Alice the Fairy* (2004) by David Shannon are better choices.

Brett, Jan. *The Umbrella*. G.P.Putman's Sons, 2004. ISBN 0399242155. \$16.99. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Lillian H. Heil

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy Fiction;

Subject: Rain Forest Animals--Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews;

Brett's "The Umbrella" gives a tropical setting for a story similar to another of her books, "The Mitten". The animals in the forest crawl into the umbrella. Carlos, who owns the umbrella has set it under a tree and climbs the tree looking for tropical animals. While he climbs, the animals are getting into the umbrella, being tossed in the river, sinking and finally all but the frog crawl off into the forest. Brett does her usual accurate and colorful paintings of the tropical birds and animals. She shows what Carlos is doing and what the animals in the umbrella are doing - making two parallel stories on each page. Young and old will enjoy the joke on Carlos and enjoy seeing the variety of animals that live in a rain forest.

Justice, Jennifer and Allen, Sarah. *The Kingfisher Children's Encyclopedia*. Kingfisher, 2004. ISBN 0753467679. \$24.95. 468 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Reference;

Subject: Children's Encyclopedias and Dictionaries; Books--Reviews;

The entries in this reference book range from such topics as "Aborigine" to "Immune System" to "Viking." The main heading for each entry is bold-faced and is followed by a concise definition of the subject to be highlighted. Entries range in length from one to four pages. Many of the entries also include a "Fast Facts" box that lists key dates or extra information, and a "See Also" box that refers the reader to related articles. As with many of Kingfisher's reference works, illustrations and photographs are plentiful to complement the text. The appendix, "FactFinder," includes a map of the world, a listing of Canadian provinces and U.S. states, and a brief biographical listing of some important composers, authors and scientists. The information is current enough to include information on the war in Iraq. This reference work was produced by editors, authors and consultants with years of experience in children's reference. Although an excellent reference book on a wide variety of topics, it would be nice to know why and how the editors chose the subjects they did for inclusion in this work.

Waxman, Laura Hamilton. *Franklin D. Roosevelt*. Illustrated by Tim Parlin. Lerner, 2005. ISBN 0822515458. \$25.26. 48 pp.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Biography; Informational Books;

Subject: Presidents--United States--Biography--Juvenile literature; Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945--Juvenile literature;

Waxman's biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt is a well-illustrated account of the life of the 32nd president of the United States. The book covers his life from birth and his childhood meeting of then-president Grover Cleveland (who made a wish that Roosevelt would never be president) to his marriage, his election as governor of New York, and his eventual presidency. Although most of the information about Roosevelt is positive, Waxman notes that Roosevelt was not popular with all Americans. The biography is both accurate when compared with encyclopedic resources and readable enough to keep the attention of its intended audience. The book contains a chronology, an index, a bibliography, suggested websites and books for further reading, and information on the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, D.C. An informative and interesting look at a well-known historical figure.

Johnson, Rebecca L. *The Digestive System*. Lerner, 2005. ISBN 0822512475. \$25.26. 48 pp.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Digestive organs--Juvenile literature;

Johnson's simple and matter-of-fact text manages to explain the detailed process of digestion without getting too technical for young minds and attention spans. The information is as accurate, though naturally not as thorough, as most encyclopedia articles. The book includes an index, a section with advice for parents to share this book with their children, and a bibliography containing other digestive system resources. An excellent and informative read and a great way to introduce kids to the human body.

Kehret, Peg. *Abduction!*. Dutton Childrens Books, 2004. ISBN 0525472940. \$16.99. 215 pp.

Reviewer: Mindi Zobell

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Detective and mystery stories;

Subject: Kidnapping--Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews;

Bonnie is sick of always being responsible for her little brother Matt, until one day he goes missing. She and her family struggle to determine what could have happened to Matt and why he has gone. Little did Bonnie and her family know, but Matt had been taken by his Dad whom he had never met. Lying and Deceiving a 6 year old was easy for Denny, handling a child on a daily basis was not. He thought that if he could show his sister that he had a kid, she would give him money to get out of his gambling debts. A chance encounter at a Mariners game brings Bonnie and her brother back together only to face a new challenge, to escape the hands of Denny. This is an entertaining story with mystery, suspense, and the love of family. Once you start you won't be able to put it down.

Dale, Anna. *Whispering to Witches*. Illustrated by Melvyn Grant. Bloomsbury, 2004. ISBN 1582348901. \$16.95. 304 pp.

Reviewer: Mindi Zobell

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Adventure stories; Detective and mystery stories;

Subject: Witches--Juvenile fiction; England--Juvenile fiction; Family--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

Dale's writing style is very unique. Her opening paragraph catches one's thoughts to ask, "Why?" or "What is going to happen?" The intensity grows with each chapter in a suspenseful children's tale of fairies and witches. The main character, Joe, sets off to spend his winter break with his mother and step-dad, while his dad goes to see a sick relative in Scotland. As Joe arrives in Canterbury, England weird things start to happen, and he realizes he has come upon a coven of witches. He meets a new friend, Twiggy, with whom he solves a mystery and saves witches all over England from being exterminated.

Whispering to Witches is very appropriate for primary and adolescent children. It is comparable to the Harry Potter Series, yet not as over-the-top in fantasy. This story puts you right into the middle of the action and keeps you reading until you have finished the book. The one thing that may distract you is the use of English spellings, which are different from American. Overall it is an excellent story that will encourage any child to love reading.

Collier, James Lincoln. *Me and Billy*. Marshall Cavendish, 2004. ISBN 0761451740. \$15.95.
185 pp.

Reviewer: Lillian H. Heil

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Adventure; Historic Fiction;

Subject: Swindlers and Swindling--Juvenile Fiction; Orphans--Juvenile Fiction; Friendship--Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews;

"Me and Billy" tells of two orphans- Billy and Possum - who escape from a cruel orphanage to go it on their own. Billy is drawn to stealing and lying to other people so he persuades Possum to join a con man who sells "healing potions." They plan to earn money in order to hunt for the gold they have heard of in the mountains, but Billy likes the life of the con man - it suits his lying style. An angry relative of a child who died from taking their potions catches up with them and in the battle the two boys help attack the angry man; the latter's gun accidentally goes off and kills him. Their con man parts company with the boys and Possum finally decides he can't go along with Billy and his dishonest ways.

Collier's excellent characterizations are achieved in the dialogue between Billy and Possum. Billy maintains he can't help himself; he just has to do "something bad," but what it really amounts to is that he has convinced himself that no one has ever done anything good for him so people deserve to be cheated. Possum finally realizes that Billy is deceiving himself and that he can't live that way. He parts company with Billy to return to help a family that has treated them kindly. The story is an interesting look at how a person can convince himself that he can't help cheating others. A recent article in the paper about an identity theft expert quoted the same rationalization from the thief when he was caught. It shows that a person who chooses to give up his free agency makes a bad choice.

MacDonald, Anne Louise. *The Ghost Horse of Meadow Green*. Kids Can Press, 2005. ISBN 1553376366. \$16.95. 207 pp.

Reviewer: Mindi Zobell

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction; Adventure stories; Contemporary realistic fiction; Ghost stories;

Subject: Horses--Juvenile fiction; Grandmothers--Juvenile fiction; Alzheimer's disease--Juvenile fiction; Self-esteem--Juvenile fiction; Book-Reviews;

Kim, a young girl, longs for a horse of her own. Unfortunately, moving to a new place with new circumstances makes it doubtful that she will get a horse or even make friends. Kim's only hope is that her Grandma Lou is coming to live with her. Then Kim thinks she sees a horse in the nearby pasture and wants to find out about it. After events progress, it looks like everything Kim ever wanted will come true. This is a story of adventure, mystery, friendship, and problems in life. Overall the book will maintain the reader's interest and inspire them to overcome evil in the world.

Fleischman, Sid. *The Giant Rat of Sumatra or Pirates Galore*. Illustrated by Hendrix, John. Greenwillow Books, 2005. ISBN 0060742399. \$16.89. 191 pp.

Reviewer: Lillian H. Heil

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Adventure; Historic Fiction;

Subject: Pirates--Juvenile Fiction; Mexican War, 1846-1848--Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews;

A twelve year old from Boston is pressed into service as a cabin boy by his angry stern uncle. When their ship blows apart in a storm he finds himself rescued by a pirate ship - The Giant Rat of Sumatra. As narrated by the boy, he sees the pirates as no more greedy than those he had seen on the streets of Boston. They stand in awe of him because he can read and write. Nicknamed Shipwreck, the boy's loyalty to the captain gets him in trouble with the greedy chief mate who aims to steal the emeralds the captain has. Another difficulty is that San Diego is in the hands of the Mexicans and they are at war with Shipwreck's country -the US. There is adventure aplenty for Shipwreck before he can start his journey home to Boston at the book's end.

The swashbuckling character of the captain, the slinky meanness of the chief mate, and the cabin boy who wonders if his actress mother in Boston will welcome him home add up to fast moving action. The boy's view of the world is of an innocent growing up and finding that adults can be very good, very bad and lots of shades in between.

Whitlock, Dean. *Sky Carver*. Clarion, 2005. ISBN 0618443932. \$16.00. 256 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter
Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult
Rating: Outstanding
Genre: Fantasy fiction;
Subject: Magic--Juvenile fiction;

Being the only child of the famous artist Thomas Painter is bad enough when you cannot paint, but young Thomas Painter (he secretly calls himself Carver) has always wanted to carve wood for a living. In the midst of a dry spell in his village, a mysterious wand drops from the sky. It signals the beginning of a strange and magical journey to find a mage who will save his town and teach him about the mysterious power that seems to come from the wand.

Although *Sky Carver* is Whitlock's first novel, he has previously written many shorter stories. The novel has elements of fantasy in it -- magic, mages, and transformations -- but also includes odd Americana bits, such as the steam boats, guns, and bicycles used by the folk downstream from Carver. The story is original and magical, the characters are well described, but parts of the story could be explained more, such as Carver's parents' role in his journey. Despite these shortcomings, many fantasy devotees will find *Sky Carver* an engaging read.

Not Listed. *The Kingfisher History Encyclopedia*. Kingfisher, 2004. ISBN 0753457849. \$24.95.
492 pp.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Nonfiction;

Subject: World History--Reference; Books--Reviews;

This engrossing reference work is an updated and revised edition of the Kingfisher History Encyclopedia originally published in 1999. The book begins with a two-page introduction entitled, "What is History?" The text is then divided into ten sections, all in chronological order from the Ancient World, ca. 40,000 B.C., to the Modern World, 1950 to the present. Other section titles include the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Revolution and Independence, and the World at War. A time line at the top of each double-page spread indicates, in red, where in world history the current chapter's events occurred. Each section covers a variety of topics from architecture to warfare, containing text boxes that list important dates. A particularly appealing aspect is that information on Chinese, Indian and Middle Eastern dynasties, historical periods that many young readers might not be very familiar with, are included. On each page are color and black-and-white photographs, maps, and ink and watercolor paintings, adding life to the text. The text is concise and direct, providing just enough information to encourage further reading and research. At the end of the text are chronologies listing kings and queens, presidents and prime ministers of most of the world's major countries. This encyclopedia was created by a production team of five editors with contributions submitted by twelve writers and two artists. The photographs of artwork come from such collections as the Bridgeman Art Library and Britain's Imperial War Museum. The Kingfisher History Encyclopedia should pique the interest of young readers and encourage them to read more on their own. It will make an outstanding addition to a reference library.

Rinaldi, Ann. *Mutiny's Daughter*. HarperCollins, 2004. ISBN 0060296380. \$15.99. 224 pp.

Reviewer: Lillian H. Heil

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Historical fiction; Adventure stories;

Subject: Historical fiction, English--Juvenile fiction; Christian, Fletcher, 1764-1793--Juvenile fiction; Christian, Mary, 1792- --Juvenile fiction; Fathers and daughters--Juvenile fiction; Family pride--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

If you have ever wondered what happened to the instigator of the famous mutiny on the HMS *Bounty*, Rinaldi's *Mutiny's Daughter* is one you will want to read. Based on stories that Fletcher Christian returned to England with his daughter Mary (by a Polynesian wife), Rinaldi tells about a girl whose grandmother does not want any hint of her scandalous background to taint the Christian name. Sent to a private school in London, Mary tries to preserve the family honor and still find her father. She discovers adventure aplenty and appears at the end of the book to have found her father.

Rinaldi's vivid characterizations bring the super strict grandmother, street wise boy, nasty blackmailing roommate, and Mary to life. Mary deals with hiding her identity and searching for her father, consequently there is plenty of personal conflict in this "what if" Fletcher Christian story.

Pearce, Philippa. *The Little Gentleman*. Illustrated by Tom Pohrt. Greenwillow, 2004. ISBN 0060731613. \$16.89. 200 pp.

Reviewer: Irene Halliday

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Old age--Juvenile fiction; England--Juvenile fiction; Grandparent and child--Juvenile fiction; Moles (Animals)--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Friendship--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

Life for Elizabeth, called Bet, is filled with sameness. As a result of her parents' divorce, when not at school, Bet lives with her grandparents, the Allum's. Mrs. Allum housecleans for old Mr. Franklin, who is laid up with a broken leg, and often brings Bet along to help. When Mr. Franklin asks Bet to go out to the meadow, sit on a particular log, and read aloud from a book about earthworms Mrs. Allum decides he is "cracked in the head." But Bet, happy to do something that isn't housework, feels unusually free and happy. Her first reading excursion doesn't produce Mr. Franklin's desired result, but the next one does. Bet is astounded when a mole surfaces, listens, and initiates a conversation with her. Over the weeks, mutual trust develops and their friendship deepens to the point that the mole shares with Bet his lifetime of adventures spanning hundreds of years. For a normal mole, such longevity would be impossible, but due to some 18th century Scottish witchcraft, this mole's life has been extended indefinitely; and later, eating magic herbs gives him the gift of speech, memory and untapped powers which he and Bet gradually discover. Bet suspects he even has the ability to shrink her to his size, allowing her to explore his underground world. Will he do it?

But the mole isn't happy. He doesn't want to be enchanted; he just wants to be all mole, not part mole with some human abilities. Bet knows she can help him, but is she willing to give up his friendship and allow him to be all mole and free of enchantment?

What child hasn't wished that a pet could talk to her? What interesting secrets a dog or a cat or a bird or a hamster could share! This entertaining book allows such an exciting thing to happen in a very natural way. But it can be enjoyed on a deeper level. As the story progresses the benefits of a true friendship surface. The ability and willingness of a real friend to help in a way that may cause personal pain is beautifully but naturally portrayed with satisfying results. Simple pencil drawings at the beginning of each chapter enhance the text and further stimulate the imagination. The British setting, with its occasionally different vocabulary, will not be a problem for young American readers; it greatly adds to the story's charm. References to historical events and mole behavior may make this book useful in social studies or science units. Children in grades 3-6 will discover the delights of a magical friendship in this well-written, imaginative story.

Napoli, Donna Jo. *North*. Greenwillow Books, 2004. ISBN 0060579889. \$16.89. 344 pp.

Reviewer: Irene Halliday

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Adventure stories; Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Runaways--Juvenile Fiction; Inuit--Juvenile Fiction; Voyages and travels--Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews;

What growing child hasn't pictured himself exploring some exotic location, fraught with challenges and dangers? Twelve-year-old Alvin is no exception. His life in a Washington DC apartment, with no father, an overprotective mother and aging grandma, and a nickname of "Dwarf" at school, leaves much to be desired. Alvin longs for adventure and to follow in the footsteps of his hero, Matthew Henson, North Pole explorer. Then one night, his overprotective mother goes too far and Alvin decides to temporarily run away to the "north". He has money, over 400 dollars earned by doing odd jobs all summer and fall, which he uses for train tickets and food as he works his way to the Arctic. He is helped on his way by the generosity of others, sheer luck, and his very naive, but courageous, personal resolve. His exploits are sometimes comical, sometimes exciting, sometimes life-threatening, and always interesting. We come to care about Alvin, a polite and honest young man, who loves his mother and grandma, yet is determined to experience life beyond his home and neighborhood.

Not only are we treated to a realistic personal saga as Alvin's story unfolds, but along the way, we pick up intriguing bits and pieces of northern Canadian and Arctic vocabulary, geography, and culture. One of the effects of Napoli's adventure is the interest in the Arctic it ignites, awakening the desire for further reading about the Inuit culture, polar bears, wolves and other Arctic wild life, icebergs, and the northern lights. In addition to its obvious literary merits, *North* would be a useful enhancement to various upper elementary and junior high classroom experiences. Enthusiastically recommended!

Tunnell, Michael O. *Wishing Moon*. Dutton Children's Books, 2004. ISBN 0525471936. \$17.99. 266 p.

Reviewer: Jessica Farmer

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Adventure Stories; Fantasy Fiction;

Subject: Genies--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Middle East--History--Juvenile fiction;

This magical twist on the story of Aladdin and his Jinni in the Lamp is a continuation of what happens to the lamp after Aladdin gets the girl. Aladdin has found fortune and happiness in the Arabian city of Al-Kal'as. However, his princess-wife is not as sweet and gentle as he once imagined her to be. One night, Princess Badr finds a beggar girl at her window searching for food. Enraged by the girl's audacity, the princess throws her husband's rusty old lamp at the girl, hitting her in the head and knocking her unconscious. The beggar girl, Aminah, regains consciousness and soon discovers the powerful inhabitant of the lamp. After tending to her own needs, setting up house and home, Aminah decides to use her good fortune to help the thousands of other beggar orphans in the city. While trying to avoid the attention of the spiteful Princess and her Captain of the Guard, Aminah secretly uses her magic lamp to enable those with pure hearts to meet their own needs and then help those around them. This is a wonderful story about friendship, good-will, and magic. Tunnell has done his research and incorporates customs, words, and folklore from Arabian cultures. He has created a delightful story with excitement and a good lesson about sharing wealth with those less fortunate. The characters are well developed and likeable, particularly the spunky and energetic Aminah and the devilish but charming Jinni. As with all good fairytales, good triumphs over evil and the reader is left with a feeling of contentment and a resolve to follow Aminah's example and help make the world a better place.

Barron, T. A. *The Great Tree of Avalon: Child of the Dark Prophecy*. Philomel Books, 2004. ISBN 0399237631. \$19.99. 434 pp.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fantasy Fiction;

Subject: Fantasy; Magic - Fiction; Avalon (legendary place) - Fiction;

The fantasy land of Avalon, as created by Barron, is a huge tree planted by Merlin which bridges Earth and Heaven. The story begins in the Year of Darkness in the realm of Fireroot within Avalon where two infant boys, Scree and Tamwyn, are saved from destruction. The Lady of the Lake's ancient prophecy is being fulfilled. The prophesy says that as the stars darken, a boy will be born who could destroy Avalon and the only one to save it will be Merlin's true heir. As the seven stars in the constellation which represents Merlin's staff go out one by one, Elli, a young priestess, Tamwyn, a homeless wild boy, and Scree, an eagle boy, go through many adventures to figure out how they can stop Kulwych, the sorcerer, and his apprentice, Harlech, from destroying Avalon.

Barron's Avalon is unique and full of an interesting array of life forms: humans, animals, giants, dwarves, museos, maryths, dragons, living stones, and wizards. Maryths and their interactions with each other and their "owners" bring another dimension to the main characters. In Avalon, communication between mortal and immortals is very important. To facilitate this communication, each priest and priestess are paired with a maryth, "so that none of us would ever forget to open our ears to other songs - no matter how different the melody, or how strange the rhythm" (p. 129).

This is the first of Barron's newest trilogy. Barron has woven a complex tale where the common quest for right to prevail is being thwarted by the selfish motives of evil. It also carries a number of varied themes, including appreciating the worth of both animals and humans, understanding the role of personal choice in one's destiny, and understanding how life experiences heal aching hearts. The story does not end with this book. Tamwyn has yet another long journey ahead of him. While emotions run high in all the characters throughout the book, the final struggle between the good and evil is especially intense and violent. While waiting for the next book in this series to be published, readers can enjoy rereading this intricate tale, to more clearly understand the characters, their origins and their powers.

Heydlauff, Lisa. *Going to School in India*. Illustrated by Upadyhe, Nitin. Charlesbridge, 2005. ISBN 1570916667. \$21.95. 98 pp.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Education-India-History-Juvenile literature; Schools-India-History-Juvenile literature;

The first of this book's many attractions is its cover. It gives the reader an idea of the beautifully bright colors and photographs that accompany the text. According to the author information, this book was inspired by one of her students, who asked what it was like to go to school in India. Heydlauff gives the reader a broad view of Indian life, including the problems of India's overcrowded government schools, what sort of things the students study, different types of schools, what sort of lunches the children eat, and more. The reader will feel some sympathy for the plight of some Indian schoolchildren, but mainly a sense of admiration and hope for their determination and ingenuity in the face of problems. An uplifting and inspiring read, recommended for third grade and up.

Hale, Shannon. *Enna Burning*. Bloomsbury, 2004. ISBN 1582348898. \$17.95. 317 pp.

Reviewer: Jessica Farmer

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Fairy tales;

Subject: Fire--Juvenile fiction; Nature--Effect of human beings on--Juvenile fiction; Book--Reviews;

This is a continuation of the story that started in *Goose Girl*, although not really a sequel. This story picks up with Enna, the best friend of the Princess Isi of Bayern. After her mother died, Enna left the castle to live with her brother, Leifer, in the forestlands. She is restless and longs for the excitement of the palace but knows that she can't leave her brother. Everything changes when whispers of war reach the forest and Leifer suddenly acquires a mysterious gift to control fire. But something happens, and it seems like the fire starts to control him. Enna and the Princess are reunited as they accompany Leifer, some common friends, Finn and Razo, and the rest of the Bayern Army to war. Leifer's ability turns the battle in Bayern's favor, but at a terrible cost, his life. Enna vows to honor her brother's memory by learning the art of fire speaking and helping the army herself. She controls the fire better than Leifer did at first, but eventually the overwhelming desire to burn almost consumes her as well. Princess Isi and Finn struggle to find a way to save Enna before the fire burns her from the inside out. They travel to a neighboring country to discover the secret to controlling the fire and ultimately discover that by combining Isi's gift of wind speaking and Enna's gift of fire speaking they can each find balance within themselves and with each other.

This is a touching story about love, friendship, loyalty, control, and balance. The writing is just as captivating as in *Goose Girl* with unexpected plot twists and the same lovable yet intriguing characters. Hale has a marvelous flair for painting scenes and developing characters in a way that inspires readers to do better and to enjoy the beauty of life and nature. This is a wonderful book for anyone who loves fairy tales, well-written heart warming stories, a little suspense, and, like all good fairytales, a happy ending.