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### Gooney Bird and the Room Mother

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Lowry, Lois. *Gooney Bird and the Room Mother*. Illustrated by Thomas, Middy. Houghton Mifflin Co., 2005. ISBN 0618532307. \$15.00. 80 pp.

Reviewer: Irene Halliday

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Humorous stories; Holiday stories;

Subject: Schools--Juvenile fiction; Thanksgiving Day-- Juvenile fiction; Humorous stories-- Juvenile fiction;

Spirited, imaginative second grader Gooney Bird Greene is back--just as engaging as in Lois Lowry's 2002 novel featuring this highly entertaining young lady. Young readers will readily identify with the atmosphere and activities of a 2nd grade classroom as Thanksgiving looms. The children are hard at work on a pageant to celebrate, when two major problems present themselves:

- 1) Everyone wants to play the role of Squanto, but only one person can be chosen.
- 2) Cupcakes for refreshments after the pageant are supplied by the room mother, but the 2nd grade class is the only class in the school without a room mother.

The teacher, Mrs. Pidgeon, has a flash of inspiration. The role of Squanto will go to the student who finds a 2nd grade room mother (and therefore pageant cupcakes). Gooney Bird excuses herself for a few minutes from pageant rehearsal and returns to announce that she is Squanto; she has found a room mother, whose name must be INCOGNITO until the day of the pageant.

The reader, whether young or older, is joyfully transported right into a classroom of children as varied in personality and point of view, as unique, and, occasionally, as frustrating as those in a real classroom. Gooney Bird's irrepressible enthusiasm for story telling, new vocabulary words, and unusual clothing combinations, coupled with a "can do" attitude, make for a thoroughly likeable and engaging heroine. The pageant day excitement continues right up to the very last page, when the identity of the mysterious room mother is finally revealed in a touching and very satisfying finale.

The Middy Thomas illustrations add just the right touch to a humorous and slightly sentimental story that will certainly leave readers wanting another visit with Gooney Bird Greene!