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The Green Glass Sea

Laura Wadley

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Klages, Ellen. *The Green Glass Sea*. Viking, 2006. ISBN 0670061344. \$16.99. 318 p.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Historical fiction

Subject: Fathers and daughters--Juvenile fiction; Scientists--Juvenile fiction; Friendship--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

The Green Glass Sea is the story of two very different young girls living in Los Alamos during the waning years of World War II as American scientists race to create an atomic bomb before the Germans do. At first Dewey and Suze hate each other but slowly they become friendly under the unusual circumstances of their lives. They are often left to their own devices as their parents work long hours on "the gadget" a mechanism whose properties remain obscure to the children until, towards the end of the book, they perch on the edge of a mesa with other members of the Manhattan Project Colony to watch the sudden brilliance and mushroom cloud of the first nuclear blast.

Dewey, Suze, and their parents are fully-realized, deeply sympathetic characters facing the difficulties of being bullied, misunderstood, and abandoned by design and tragic circumstances. The narrative is enriched by the tension the reader feels between what the kids do not know and what he or she does--"after such knowledge, what redemption?" Klages' story is almost flawlessly wrought, but parents may want to know that there is some profanity in this text. *The Green Glass Sea* would be a fine book for introducing middle school kids to the nuclear age, but it is probably better for adult audiences.