



2007

### Song of the Sparrow

Betsy Sieber

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diSandell, Lisa Ann. *Song of the Sparrow*. Scholastic, 2007. ISBN 9780439918480. \$16.99. 394 p.

Reviewer: Betsy Sieber

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Historical poetry; Historical fiction;

Subject: Arthur, King--Juvenile fiction; Coming of age--Juvenile Fiction; Knights and Knighthood--Juvenile Fiction; Novels in verse--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Elaine, a girl of sixteen, has lived with Arthur and his army of Britons, since her parents were both killed in an attack on their castle when she was very young. Being the only girl in camp she does a lot of mending, and makes herself useful by evolving into the camp medic: familiarizing herself with many herbs needed to cure sickness and help the wounded. However she is anxious to be seen as more than a little girl by her companions, especially the handsome Lancelot, for whom her once childish crush has blossomed into real affection. The war continues to rage, and a newcomer--Gwynivere, condescending and beautiful--moves into camp, upsetting the already delicate web of relationships in Elaine's life. Elaine and Gwynivere are forced to work together as they are captured by the enemy, and overhear information which may save the lives of Arthur and his men. Elaine's first-hand experiences test her ideals of love and friendship.

This novel in verse has a very likable narrator. Elaine has aspirations and dreams of who she wants to be, but doesn't quite know how to make them come true. Girls from 13 to 17 may enjoy this tale of one girl's journey from the world of children to adults. The free verse is believable, and not difficult to read, with approachable word choice while still remaining well-written. The author has taken much creative license with the storyline, using the names of characters that are familiar to us, but crafting a plot line only loosely substantiated by the already well-known version of the Arthurian knighthood. Purists of King Arthur lore may not care for this re-telling; however teenage girls are sure to love it for not only its literary merit, but its resonating storyline.

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