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The Ghost's Child

Kate Reynolds

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Hartnett, Sonya. *The Ghost's Child*. Illustrated by NA. Candlewick, 2008. ISBN 9780763639648. \$16.99. 192 p.

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Romantic fiction;

Subject: Ghosts--Juvenile fiction; Voyages and travels--Juvenile fiction; Self-acceptance--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

As a young woman, Maddy falls in love with Feather, who is as restless in a conventional lifestyle as the sea for which he continually longs. When Feather leaves one day, Maddy sets sail to find him and get an answer to the most important question of all: How do you live with loss? Upon returning home, Maddy learns to live with the pain of Feather's leaving, and makes a life and career for herself.

An unconventional romance to be sure, *The Ghost's Child* is yet intriguing. Unlike many teen love stories this one does not end with the lovers reuniting in bliss, but instead addresses the pain of not being able to remain together even though they love each other. Maddy's ability to find the strength within herself to continue living an active and full life is a worthy message as well. The language is vivid and the details are rich.

The greatest difficulty with this book, though, is in pegging an appropriate audience. The frame of the narrative, a woman telling the story to a child, would suggest younger audiences. However, the plot addresses more mature themes including Maddy's depression after a miscarriage and subsequent suicide attempt. As it is neither a normal fantasy nor romance, teen fans of those genres may also be turned off. However, mature teens may recognize its value and message.

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