



2009

The Water Seeker

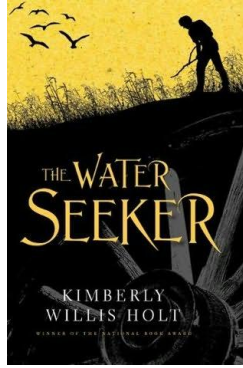
Marsha D. Broadway

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Holt, Kimberly Willis. *The Water Seeker*. Henry Holt, 2010. ISBN 9780805080209. \$16.99. 309 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction; Historical fiction;

Subject: Coming of age--Juvenile fiction; Fathers and sons--Juvenile fiction; Frontier and pioneer life--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Amos, whose mother dies in childbirth, is the son of a trapper and dowser. His father Jake cannot care for his infant son and takes Amos to live with his childless brother and sister-in-law, who delight in their young charge. Frontier life for Amos is filled with adversity, loss, adventure, friends, enemies, love, accidents, death, and courage. In addition, Amos must come to terms with his father, his inherited dowsing and artistic skills, and his own son.

The novel spans 26 years of Amos' life, embraces almost two dozen idiosyncratic characters, and incorporates the watchful presence of his dead mother. Secondary characters are deftly created, and the plot inspires page turning. The sense for pioneer hardship and determination pervades the narrative. Although epic in its story, some actions seem somewhat contrived and abbreviated, as in the drowning accident of the hard-hearted, prideful Mr. Winthrop, who abused his wife and child. Because Holt's writing is so readable, perhaps a series would have allowed readers to continue to enjoy Amos Kincaid's life.

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