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Darkbeast

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Book Review

Title: Darkbeast

Author: Morgan Keyes

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Publisher: Margaret K. McElderry Books

Publication Year: 2012

ISBN: 9781442442054

Number of Pages: 280

Interest Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent



Review

Like all the children in Keara's world, she was blessed with an animal companion or darkbeast at her birth. The darkbeast has a magical connection to take upon themselves the faults and flaws of their human child. At the age of twelve, children sacrifice their darkbeasts to show they have left childhood and entered adulthood. But when Keara turns twelve, she cannot kill her darkbeast, Caw. Her failure causes her family to shun her and sets the religious order of the Inquisitors after her. She runs away with Caw and joins a caravan of actors called the Travelers. She keeps her age a secret and finds acceptance in the group. But when Keara's friend, Goran, refuses to kill his own darkbeast and a Traveler discovers Keara's secret, Inquisitors are set upon the two children. Only Goran's grandfather, Taggart, helps the children escape.

Keyes has created an incredibly detailed world where religious and patriotic beliefs intertwine in a fantastical Dark Ages society. At times the complexity of Keyes' world can cause some confusion when it comes to describing the twelve gods in their religion and imagining the locations of cities and villages Keara visits. It would have helped Keyes' story to have a description of the twelve gods and a map showing Keara's land at the beginning of the book. Otherwise, Keara's story is a compelling tale based on faith, doubts, friendship, and holding fast to beliefs in your heart. *Darkbeast* echoes similar themes found in *Fly By Night*, *The Golden Compass*, or *Beyonders*. Keyes second book is called *Darkbeast Rebellion*.

*Contains animal sacrifice.