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Lights on the Nile

Abigail Packard

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Book Review

Title: Lights on the Nile
Author: Donna Jo Napoli
Reviewer: Abigail Packard
Publisher: HarperCollins
Publication Year: 2011
ISBN: 9780061667954
Number of Pages: 267
Interest Level: Intermediate, Young Adult
Rating: Significant Shortcomings



Review

Kepi had no intention of journeying up the Nile to the capital city to speak directly with Pharaoh Khufu. She was content to stay at home and help her crippled father begin his baking business. But when some boys steal Babu, the baby baboon that Kepi saved, Kepi has to journey up the Nile to save him once more. Along the way Kepi herself is kidnapped, faces many dangers, meets new friends in the capital city, and eventually finds herself face to face with Pharaoh Khufu—the pharaoh who commissioned the pyramid that Kepi’s father was injured while building. Kepi fails to convince the pharaoh of the injustice that he has neglected to correct. She and her friends are saved the punishment for approaching the pharaoh in the sacred temple by a goddess who offers them a second life as feru; they will be able to help others to avoid problems and injustices. Kepi agrees to become a feru and returns briefly to her family to ensure them that she is safe before beginning her new life.

Donna Jo Napoli has certainly done her homework in the creation of Kepi’s story. The information about the various gods and goddesses, the Egyptian words, and the setting along the Nile is detailed and thorough. Kepi is an approachable character who learns many things throughout her journey. However, she is a flat character who begins as an unbelievably naive child and ends still a naive child. For example, Kepi makes some overtly poor decisions within the first few chapters of the book which lead to her kidnapping that seems forced and dubious at best. And although this is a story that centers around her journey up the Nile, the telling of it was slow and unexciting. The ending also left much to be desired when, out of nowhere, a goddess herself appears and saves Kepi and her friends in a literal rendering of the literary faux pas of *deus ex machina*. Although the setting and the information were very sound, the story was one anticlimactic moment after another.

*Contains mild language and kidnapping.