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Nooks & Crannies

Tessa McMillan

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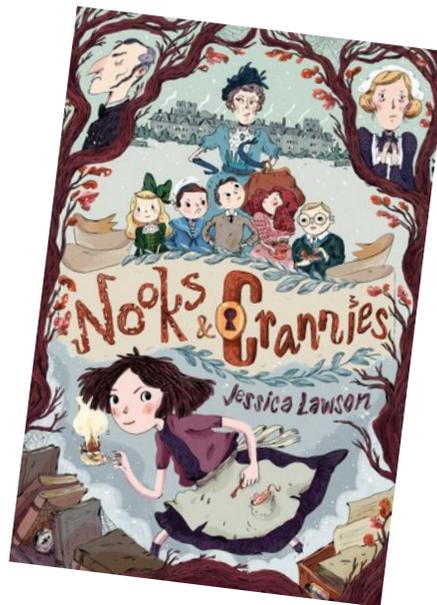
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Book Review

Title: Nooks & Crannies
Author: Jessica Lawson
Illustrator: Natalie Andrewson
Reviewer: Tessa McMillan
Publisher: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers
Publication Year: 2015
ISBN: 9781481419222
Number of Pages: 316
Interest Level: Intermediate
Rating: Outstanding



Review

Life for Tabitha Crum has been difficult because of neglectful parents and a harsh school bully. The two things that help Tabitha survive are taking care of her pet mouse Pemberley and reading the Inspector Pensive mysteries. Just when her parents are about to abandon her, Tabitha receives an invitation from the Countess of Windermere to stay for the weekend. The Crums postpone their trip hoping they can cash in Tabitha for the Countess's fortune. However, they learn five other children have been invited as well. When all the guests arrive at the Windermere estate, they are greeted by an unstable countess. She has invited the six children because all of them were dropped off at the same orphanage where her rumored grandchild was left behind. With no other records, the Countess is left with these six children as her possible heir. As the weekend gets underway, a sickly Windermere tenant dies mysteriously and the children start disappearing. Using her detective skills, Tabitha learns that the woman claiming to be the countess is a fake and that the real countess is hiding within the secret rooms of the estate.

Nooks & Crannies is a delicious read from start to finish. Lawson takes several classic story elements from some of literature's giants—like Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Roald Dahl—to create a delectable middle-grade mystery any age group would enjoy. Readers will fall in love with young Tabitha as she rises above her sad circumstances using her intellect, positive thinking, and keen observations to help those around her. When Tabitha hears the Countess's story of her abandoned grandchild, Tabitha immediately believes she is not the lost heir. By disconnecting herself from the Countess's off-putting affections, Tabitha is gifted with an objective view of the house and its occupants that help her connect clues in solving a mysterious death, locating the kidnapped children, and revealing the true identity of the Countess. In the end, her detective skills and positive thinking bless her life in ways she couldn't even image. A must-read for any mystery lover young or old.