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The Many Reflections of Miss Jane Deming

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Book Review

Title: The Many Reflections of Miss Jane Deming

Author: J. Anderson Coats

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Publisher: Atheneum Books for Young Readers

Year: 2017

ISBN: 9781481464963

Pages: 278

Interest Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent



Review

After losing her father in the Civil War, Jane Deming gives up her friends and schooling to raise her baby stepbrother while her young stepmother works in the mill. Unexpectedly, Jane's stepmother enlists the three of them in an expedition to bring unmarried women to Washington Territory. Using the expedition's pamphlet as a textbook, Jane works on developing the social and educational skills she needs to survive in the Pacific Northwest. During their sea voyage, Jane's stepmother tries to keep Jane from improving her abilities for selfish reasons. Luckily, Jane's new friends and passengers come to her rescue. When they finally arrive in Seattle, Jane and her stepmother discover that it is a wilder place than they expected. With only one suitor, a shy mountain man called Mr. Wright, Jane's stepmother marries him and all four trek to his secluded homestead. With Mr. Wright's influence, Jane becomes more self-reliant than she ever expected and she flourishes in her new home.

The Many Reflections of Miss Jane Deming is an unpretentious coming-of-age story full of yearning and determination. When Jane's father dies, she loses the only person who believed in her potential. Immaturely, her stepmother forces Jane to give up her dreams for their family's survival. But as they embark on the expedition, Jane's new friends point out that Jane's stepmother is using Jane. Quietly, Jane fights for any control over her life. In the end, Jane's stepmother finally releases her hold on Jane, thanks to Mr. Wright. Once that hold is gone, Jane is free to become her true, independent self. One item Coats should have included is an author's note stating the historical facts behind her story. This would have given the book more validity and richness. Otherwise, Coats's tale is a fun and enlightening read for ages twelve and up.