



Orphan Island

Emilee Bell

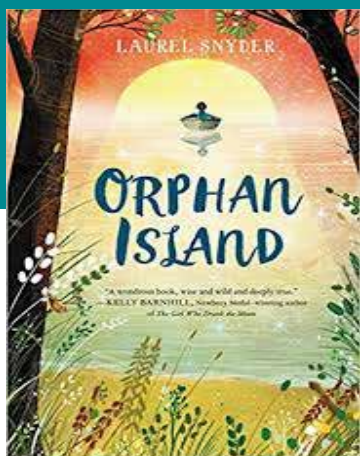
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Book Review

Orphan Island

Author

Laurel Snyder

Illustrator

David Litchfield

Reviewer

Emilee Bell

Rating

Excellent

Level

Primary, Intermediate,
Young Adult

Pages

269

Year

2017

Publisher

Walden Pond Press

ISBN

9780062445940

Nine orphans live together on a magical island and every year, a small child skims across the sea to trade places with the oldest child and is mentored by the oldest child left. Blue-eyed Jinny struggles with wide-eyed Ess, but ultimately rebels from the law passed down by oral tradition that the Elder must leave upon arrival of a new child. Little by little, the magic of the island turns into curses until the ultimate horror happens: the new small one is bitten by a once-gentle snake. It's in the emergency that Jinny realizes that she must forget about what she wants and leave the island to save another.

Orphan Island is a book to fall head over heels into. The whimsical imagery that weaves throughout the book is akin to a blend of the Anne of Green Gables series, Peter Pan, and Julie Andrew's Mandy. Snyder's ability to convey deep and intimate emotions from childhood is so acute that the reader might need to take a break. Instead of trying to psychoanalyze the characters, the author simply observes the feelings, actions, and consequences of each child (mainly Jinny). The book subtly but powerfully addresses loss, self-control, selfishness, puberty, periods, and self-discovery. However, none of these issues are fully teased out or explained, which may leave the reader on uneven emotional terrain, especially at the close of the novel.