



2018

Family Tree: Better to Wish

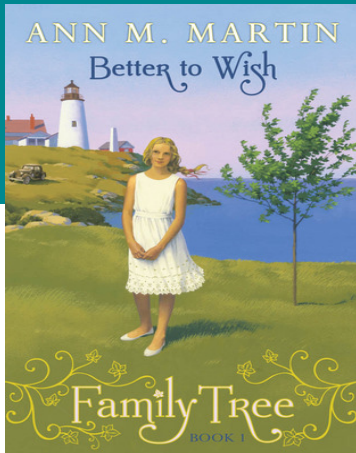
Leah Christopher

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Christopher, Leah (2018) "Family Tree: Better to Wish," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 39 : Iss. 1 , Article 27.
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Book Review

Family Tree: Better to Wish

Author

Ann M. Martin

Illustrator

Reviewer

Leah Christopher

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate

Pages

240

Year

2013

Publisher

Scholastic Press

ISBN

9780545359429

Better to Wish follows Abby Nichols, a thoughtful oldest child living in 1930s Maine. In one-day snapshots over a decade of her life, Abby must witness her mother's declining health, care for her younger siblings, move away from friends, watch her father banish her brother with special needs to an institution, mourn the death of a friend in an accident, and defend her friendships with children of other social classes. Although her hardships provide heartache, Abby finds joy in making new friends, crushing on her cute older neighbor, Zander—whom she marries at the end of the novel—and learning how to trust and love a family that seems broken at times.

Fans of Ann M. Martin's Baby-Sitter's Club and Baby-Sitter's Little Sister series will delight in Martin's new Family Tree series, which vividly captures the viewpoint of youth. Rather than being one-dimensional, Abby's voice matures with each chapter as she grows up. Characters in Better to Wish deal with realistic challenges, including sibling relationships, moving, prejudice, parental nagging, and disabilities. Martin does not shy away from these serious issues, but she does navigate them in a way friendly to middle-grade readers and above. However, readers who love easy solutions and fairy-tale endings may want to look elsewhere.