



2010

A Nest for Celeste

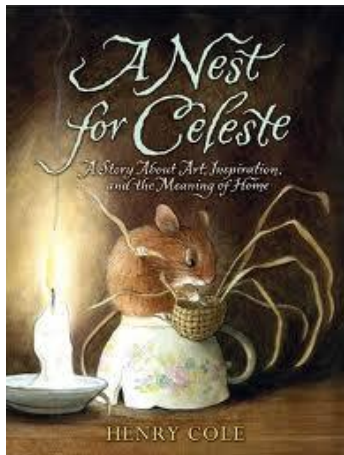
Tessa McMillan

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McMillan, Tessa (2010) "A Nest for Celeste," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 31 : Iss. 2 , Article 10.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol31/iss2/10>

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Cole, Henry. *A Nest for Celeste*. Illustrated by Henry Cole. Katherine Tegen Books, 2010. ISBN 9780061704109. \$16.99. 352 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction; Adventure stories;

Subject: Mason, Joseph, 1807-1883 --Childhood and youth --Juvenile fiction; Audubon, John James, 1785-1851 --Juvenile fiction; Mice --Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Celeste is a small mouse who lives under the floor boards of a Southern plantation. While making her way to the main floor to get food, a houseguest, Joseph, picks up Celeste before the house cat captures her. Joseph, who is an assistant to John James Audubon, is learning to paint plants for Audubon's backgrounds. Unfortunately, Joseph is having a hard time trying to please Audubon's perfective nature and submitting to Audubon's treatment of his animal subjects. But Joseph gains confidence with Celeste nestled inside his shirt pocket. While with Joseph, Celeste witnesses Audubon's artistic genius, creates two new friendships with a thrush and an osprey, and finds a new home in a little doll house up in the attic. But the cat isn't far behind. While trapped in the attic, Celeste sees Joseph and Audubon leave the plantation. Celeste feels alone in her doll house, but because of her friendship with the thrush, a wren comes to stay the winter with her.

Cole's book is not a quaint story; it's a serious piece of literature. Celeste's life is full of death and danger, which helps readers paint a somewhat realistic picture of a mouse's life. But it also paints a realistic picture of Audubon's macabre treatment of animals. The illustrations are breath-taking and the story is based on true events in Audubon's life. The structure of this book is very similar to *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, while the story mimics themes found in *The Tale of Despereaux*.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)