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The Great Unexpected by Sharon Creech

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In this whimsical tale, Sharon Creech weaves the magic of Ireland with the small American dirt-road town of Blackbird Tree as she ties readers’ hearts to two orphan girls on a journey to find a sense of belonging. Striving to understand their place in the world, best friends Lizzie and Naomi discover that when blood relatives are not to be found, people with similar experiences and dreams have equal potential to forge lasting bonds.

Creech successfully captures the enchantment of growing up as she delves into the heartache, mystery, and surprise that entwines the lives of the two orphans of Blackbird Tree, Lizzie and Naomi. Creech’s tale teaches readers that the path to self-discovery often begins with taking the time to learn more about our neighbors and our past. It is a path that Naomi clearly takes as she eventually chooses to wade past the townfolk’s cruel local nicknames. In doing so she makes new friends and gains significant insight into herself. Creech teaches readers valuable lessons about the gems that can be discovered when we step out of our comfort zone and care for those around us. Middle school students will find comradery and solace in The Great Unexpected, as they will easily relate to the two main characters. Teachers and parents alike could utilize The Great Unexpected to instill confidence and integrity in their young readers.

Reviewer: Sydnee Floyd

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