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The Emperor's Ostrich

Rachel Waddam

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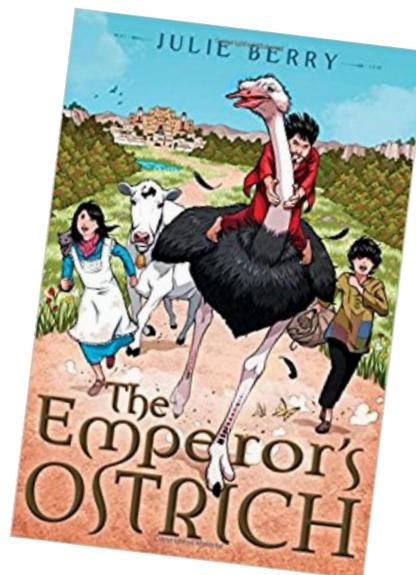
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Book Review

Title: The Emperor's Ostrich
Author: Julie Berry
Reviewer: Rachel Wadham
Publisher: Roaring Brook Press
Publication Year: 2017
ISBN: 9781596439580
Number of Pages: 276
Interest Level: Primary, Intermediate
Rating: Outstanding



Review

The young Emperor is going to take the throne, but Grandfather Spirit thinks he's not ready, so he sends him off on an adventure accompanied by an ostrich to protect him. Grandmother Spirit has had enough of this meddling, so she sends Maid Begonia chasing after her errant cow. Along the way, Key, a boy who is bound to save damsels in distress, joins the group as the emperor's ostrich and Begonia's cow refuse to be separated. Back home, a trio of men are plotting to take the throne while Begonia's mother sets out to find her daughter. All the quests converge when the Emperor is taken to the dungeons and everyone must work together so he can prove that his adventures served to make him a better man.

This delightful story weaves in and out of various simultaneously running plot lines in such an expert way that in the end all the stories come together beautifully. Berry indicates that among her inspirations for the story were the works of Lloyd Alexander, and his influence will be clearly visible to fans. The story is playful and achieves a nice balance between complexity and simplicity making it accessible to elementary and middle-grade readers. Filled with lots of delightful humor and characters that are richly drawn, Berry packs her imaginary setting with grand adventures that are so creative and deftly handled that a wide range of readers will find much to enjoy in this fantastical romp.