

ANNOTATIONS AND REVIEWS OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Annotation and Review of *Each Little Bird that Sings*

Annotation:

Wiles, Deborah. *Each Little Bird that Sings*. Harcourt, Inc, 2005. 247 pages. \$16.00. ISBN 978-0-15-205113-9.

Living in rural Mississippi and in a family that runs the funeral home, ten-year-old Comfort Snowberger thought she understood that death is a part of life and all the emotion that goes along with death until it happens to her in her own family.

Review:

Wiles, Deborah. *Each Little Bird that Sings*. Harcourt, 2005. 247 pages. \$16.00. ISBN 978-0-15-205113-9. Ages 8 to 12.

Living in the rural Mississippi town of Snapfinger, and in the local funeral home, ten-year-old Comfort Snowberger is no stranger to death. She has attended over 200 funerals and wrote life notices as opposed to death notices for the local paper. However, after the death of her great uncle Edisto, Comfort has a hard time accepting her younger cousin's uncontrollable emotion at the loss. It doesn't help that her best friend, Declaration, seems to be distancing herself and their friendship is becoming strained. While she would rather be working on the friendship, Comfort is caught up in another family death that of her 94-year-old great-great-aunt Florentine. Although Wiles uses a slow, meandering pace that resembles the rural setting and lifestyle of the characters, the continuous action keeps the reader's interest. Wiles allows readers to experience life, death, and growing up through Comfort's first person narrative. An excellent resource for students dealing with loss of a loved one.

Annotation and Review of *When You Reach Me*

Annotation:

Stead, Rebecca. *When You Reach Me*. Wendy Lamb Books/Random House, 2009. 197 pages. \$15.99. ISBN 978-0-385-73742-5.

Twelve year old sixth grader, Miranda struggles to make sense of mysterious notes that keep appearing telling her about the future and asking for help during a time where she must adjust to adolescent life and problems with family, friends, and school in the 1980's.

Review:

Stead, Rebecca. *When You Reach Me*. Wendy Lamb Books/Random House, 2009. 197 pages. \$15.99. ISBN 978-0-385-73742-5. Grades 5-8, ages 10-14.

Living in a small, crummy apartment in New York City with her mom, twelve year old Miranda tells the first-person narrative of her life as she addresses an unknown letter writer. It all seems to start with the unexplainable blow-off of her best friend, Sal, after he gets punched one day by a kid walking home from school. During the process of trying to make new friends, coming to terms with Sal's disinterest in their friendship, and helping her mother prepare to be a contestant on a game show, Miranda starts receiving strange anonymous notes telling her of future events and asking for her help. While Miranda rereads her all-time favorite book, L'Engle's *Wrinkle in Time*, Stead masterfully begins entwining bits and pieces of L'Engle's work into the plot as the past and the present start to shift. Stead's dynamic creativity is evidenced in tying the L'Engle classic into a modern day scenario that will entice readers, especially those familiar with L'Engle. A fun and enjoyable book to promote to L'Engle lovers as well as students struggling in friendships.

Review of Folk/Fairy Tale

Isadora, Rachel. *The Ugly Duckling*. G.P. Putman, 2009. Pub, yr. 23 pages. \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-399-25029-3. Grades: Pre-K through 2nd grade.

A classical retelling of Andersen's tale with an unusual adaptive flair, Isadora sets her version in Africa. Using bright colored paper collage illustrations, the ugly duckling hatches dark and gray compared to his yellow duck siblings. Following the main storyline, the ugly duckling however encounters such animals as a baboon and a giraffe, native to the land when he gets to the pond. Likewise, when he comes to the farmer's home, the ugly duckling encounters the farmer's wife who is dressed to clearly resemble the African culture. To complete the African theme, the ugly duckling transforms into a beautiful black swan, a species indigenous of Africa.

Compared to Adrian Mitchell's version (DK Publishing, 1994) which keeps more closely to the traditional setting and uses dark bordered, muted imagery that make a good match for older readers, Isadora's simplified story along with her brightly vivid illustrations soften the portrayal of hardships the ugly duckling faces making her version more appealing and suitable for younger audiences. An excellent addition to the collection of folk tales as well as a resource to explore African culture.