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Moon Over Manifest



Synopsis

Winner of the 2011 Newbery Award. The movement of the train rocked me like a lullaby. I closed my eyes to the dusty countryside and imagined the sign I'd seen only in Gideon's stories: Manifest "A Town with a rich past and a bright future." Abilene Tucker feels abandoned. Her father has put her on a train, sending her off to live with an old friend for the summer while he works a railroad job. Armed only with a few possessions and her list of universals, Abilene jumps off the train in Manifest, Kansas, aiming to learn about the boy her father once was. Having heard stories about Manifest, Abilene is disappointed to find that it's just a dried-up, worn-out old town. But her disappointment quickly turns to excitement when she discovers a hidden cigar box full of mementos, including some old letters that mention a spy known as the Rattler. These mysterious letters send Abilene and her new friends, Lettie and Ruthanne, on an honest-to-goodness spy hunt, even though they are warned to "Leave Well Enough Alone." Abilene throws all caution aside when she heads down the mysterious Path to Perdition to pay a debt to the reclusive Miss Sadie, a diviner who only tells stories from the past. It seems that Manifest's history is full of colorful and shadowy characters and long-held secrets. The more Abilene hears, the more determined she is to learn just what role her father played in that history. And as Manifest's secrets are laid bare one by one, Abilene begins to weave her own story into the fabric of the town. Powerful in its simplicity and rich in historical detail, Clare Vanderpool's debut is a gripping story of loss and redemption. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Mysteries & Detectives

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Gr 5-8â “History and fiction marry beautifully in this lively debut novel. It’s as if readers jump off the train in Manifest, KS, in 1936 with Abilene Tucker, 12, the feisty, likable, and perceptive narrator. She is there to live with Pastor Shady Howard, her father’s friend, while her father works on the railroad back in Iowa. An equally important story set during World War I is artfully intertwined. Since her mother went off on her own 10 years earlier, Abilene and Gideon have been alone. Though their life together is unsettled, their bond is strong. Shady’s place is shabby, but he is welcoming. The mystery about Manifest and Gideon unfolds after Abilene finds a box filled with intriguing keepsakes. It includes a letter dated 1917 to someone named Jinx from Ned Gillen that has a warning, â œTHE RATTLER is watching.â • This starts Abilene, with the help of new friends Ruthanne and Lettie, on a search to learn the identity of the pair. The story cleverly shifts back and forth between the two eras. Abilene becomes connected to Miss Sadie, a â œdivinerâ • who slowly leads her through the story of Ned and Jinx. Though the girl is lonely, she adjusts to her new life, feeling sure that her father will come for her at summer’s end. The Ku Klux Klan and its campaign against the many immigrants working in the coal mines and the deplorable conditions and exploitation of these men provide important background. This thoroughly enjoyable, unique page-turner is a definite winner.â “Renee Steinberg, formerly at Fieldstone Middle School, Montvale, NJ” (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review After a life of riding the rails with her father, 12-year-old Abilene canâ™t understand why he has sent her away to stay with Pastor Shady Howard in Manifest, Missouri, a town he left years earlier; but over the summer she pieces together his story. In 1936, Manifest is a town worn down by sadness, drought, and the Depression, but it is more welcoming to newcomers than it was in 1918, when it was a conglomeration of coal-mining immigrants who were kept apart by habit, company practice, and prejudice. Abilene quickly finds friends and uncovers a local mystery. Their summerlong â œspy huntâ • reveals deep-seated secrets and helps restore residentsâ™ faith in the bright future once promised on the townâ™s sign. Abileneâ™s first-person narrative is intertwined with newspaper columns from 1917 to 1918 and stories told by a

diviner, Miss Sadie, while letters home from a soldier fighting in WWI add yet another narrative layer. Vanderpool weaves humor and sorrow into a complex tale involving murders, orphans, bootlegging, and a mother in hiding. With believable dialogue, vocabulary and imagery appropriate to time and place, and well-developed characters, this rich and rewarding first novel is â œlike sucking on a butterscotch. Smooth and sweet.â • Grades 5-8. --Kathleen Isaacs --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Fantastic book! My daughter is a Seventh Grader and a bit older than the recommended age of "8-12", but I think that older readers might get even more out of the rich material in this book. The story paints a vivid picture of a small town that could stand for many in the U.S., and manages to convey the living conditions, attitudes, and historical circumstances of two historical time periods. Immigration, working conditions, class differences, economic hardship, drought, and community spirit are all addressed in an amazingly engaging story line. The center stage goes to love, kinship of all kinds, friendship, and understanding. Once the characters overcome their isolation into ethnic groups and find their common humanity, they form a community that is more than the sum of its parts, just like the USA (in my opinion as an adult European immigrant to this country.) A true insight into the famed "melting pot" of America, showing its challenges and triumphs. Once my daughter was done with the book, my husband and I devoured it. We couldn't put it down! It was a great chance to talk to our daughter about what we would call "Americana" of earlier time periods, as older cultural contributions relate to the story line: Burl Ives and his song "The Big Rock Candy Mountain", and Tennessee Ernie Ford's "16 tons." HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!!!

Twelve-year-old Abilene Tucker has just been sent away for the summer, and she's really not sure why. All her life, it's been just her and her father Gideon, mostly riding the rails from place to place as the Depression progressed. Now it's 1936 and Abilene finds herself in Manifest, Kansas, a town where her father spent time as a boy. But Gideon's not there with her. And even worse, Abilene doesn't see much that resembles the vibrant town of Gideon's stories, just a worn-out, dusty community struggling along with the rest of the country. Yet thanks to some old letters she finds under the floorboards of her temporary bedroom, Abilene embarks on a mystery dating back to 1918. And while she's at it, maybe she'll find out a few things about the father who's never spoken much about his past... Not only is Abilene a compelling character in her own right, but Vanderpool has done an excellent job fleshing out the details of both World War I- and Depression-era America.

I finished this book over spring break, and thoroughly enjoyed both the story and the writing. Vanderpool uses a narration technique that I enjoy: two different narrators from two different eras telling two different stories about the same place and theme. The book is set in late-Depression-Dust Bowl Kansas and the narrator is a twelve-thirteen year-old girl exploring a town that her father had lived in. The book then moves back to 1917 and the narration is in third person. The tale then jumps back and forth between 1937 and 1917-1918, both plots advancing with clues about possible connections. The writing is solid, the characters believable, and the story is engaging. Vanderpool develops her characters through dialogue and action and less through direct description. The book is aimed at young adults, but the content matter and writing easily engages adults. All in all, an excellent read!

As Abilene Tucker jumps from a train heading toward Manifest, Kansas in 1936 I felt as if I was heading back in time with her as the book intertwines between 1936 and 1917-1918. The book is based on historical fiction and reveals stories that take place during World War I and the Depression. Abilene is a 12 year old girl who has been sent to Manifest for the summer to live with a Pastor Shady, who is an old friend of her father. Abilene finds a cigar box of letters and mementos under a board in her new room. This discovery leads to more questions about the town, the people who live there now and those who passed through years earlier, and the big question which is "How does my father fit into this town". As the hot, dry summer days drag on Abilene and two new friends start on a quest to unravel the mysteries of the past as they read the letters found in a cigar box between Ned and Jinx. Their "spy hunt" for the "RATTLER" eventually leads Abilene to Mrs. Sadie's house the "diviner" who begins to recall the past. While Abilene works her debt off the Mrs. Sadie she listens intently to the stories as she realizes that her tales are related to the cigar box full of letters and mementos. What Abilene uncovers helps to bring the town's bright future back as well as the answers to her questions that she spent her entire summer searching for. Abilene's first person narrative is intertwined with Mrs. Sadie's stories, the letters from Ted to Jinx, and a newspaper column. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys reading historical fiction from fifth grade on because it recounts actual historical events through a fictional aspect. Everything about this book is realistic from the plot to the characters. A very intriguing book, which I would read again and again. This is why I give Moon Over Manifest five stars.

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