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The Mysterious Edge Of The Heroic World



Synopsis

Discoveries Amedeo Kaplan dreams of discovering something -- some treasure no one realizes is there until he finds it. And he would like to discover a true friend to share this with. Improbably, he finds the friend in aloof, edgy William Wilcox. And even more improbably, he finds his treasure among the memorabilia in the house of his eccentric neighbor, Mrs. Zender. But Amedeo and William find more than treasure -- they find a story that links a sketch, a young boy's life, an old man's reminiscence, and a painful secret dating back to the outrages of Nazi Germany. And they discover unexpected truths about art, friendship, history, heroism, and the mysteries of the human heart.

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

Customer Reviews

Grade 5—8 •This humorous, poignant, tragic, and mysterious story has intertwining plots that peel away like the layers of an onion. An unlikely friendship develops between two precocious sixth graders as they unite to sort through the belongings of an eccentric, pretentious, and intriguing neighbor. William's mother is a liquidator hired to evaluate Mrs. Zender's possessions as the old woman gets ready to move into a residence for senior citizens, and William is helping her. Amadeo asks to join him in the project. William is a bright, sophisticated youngster; Amadeo, the

new kid in St. Malo, FL, dreams of someday making an important discovery. He suspects there are possibilities among Mrs. Zender's belongings, particularly a piece of art by Modigliani. Amadeo's godfather, Peter Vanderwaal, is preparing an exhibit of Degenerate Art for the Sheboygan Art Center. This plotline leads to a discovery about Mr. Zender's past. Through old letters, parts of a memoir written by Peter's father, Peter's introduction to his exhibit, and thumbnail biographies of the artists deemed unfit by the Nazis, readers are educated about this aspect of Nazi repression. Dramatic revelations about the victimization of homosexuals and other figures during the Holocaust also become part of the story. In spite of these necessary intrusions, readers will be eager to discover the truth about the Zenders and the suspicious art treasure. Konigsburg, a master of characterization, has created a cast of idiosyncratic people and skillfully embedded them in an appealing tale of friendship, loyalty, and mystery. --Renee Steinberg, formerly at Fieldstone Middle School, Montvale, NJ Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Humorous, poignant, tragic, and mysterious...Konigsburg, a master of characterization, has created a cast of idiosyncratic people and skillfully embedded them in an appealing tale of friendship, loyalty, and mystery." -- School Library Journal

This book is considered a children's book, but its subject matter is deeply troubling, as well as entertaining in the course of the book. I loved it and know I will read it over and over again. I love Konigsburg's writing style and almost want to say it is too good to be a children's book, but grateful there are such authors as E.L. Konigsburg to stretch the minds of readers, no matter what their age.

ALWAYS ENTERTAINING KONIGSBURG. . . .CONGRATULATIONS. . .WE'LL MISS HER!

EXCELLENT!!!!

Brilliant writing! I love an author who is so good at their work, that I cannot skim a word. This is appropriate for teens but also for adults.

She's repeating herself. Then everyone cries at the end. Not her best work, which is of course very good indeed.

I did finish this book even though I gave it one star. This book was written for middle grades--ages 9 to 12 probably. But the topic was how homosexuals were treated during the Nazi regime. I do not agree with what the Nazis did! However, I feel a topic of this nature should not be addressed for young children in a youth fiction. It seems to me, after reading *Silent to the Bone* and then this one, that E. L. Konigsburg has turned into a "cause" writer. Whether or not you take up a cause is fine, but person's own causes that deal with controversial topics should not be taken up in youth fiction.

Wow...where to begin? A mother and her son do estate sales for a living. A young neighbor, who happens to be an artist's son and a godchild of an art gallery owner, becomes friends with the boy and helps organize one of the houses to ready it for a sale. Simultaneously, the godfather happens to be opening an art show of art deemed degenerate by the Nazis. This show reveals some secrets to his own past. Coincidentally, the boys uncover a piece of art that unravels more of the story for the godfather that requires its owner to face some dark secrets about her husband. There are elements of this book which I would love to applaud highly. It has deeply developed characters. It endlessly jaunts off on detailed tangents - some of which ultimately are all intertwined into an important contribution to the whole - some not. I like that. Sometimes the foreshadowing in a story is too obvious...you can feel it immediately and your mind starts racing off to tie up the ends before the author does. To me, the clues in *Mysterious Edge* were not showing their hand too early since many of the jaunts led to nowhere except a fuller perception of the characters. At the end of the book, I could literally see every major character fully in my mind and knew them like a friend. The connection between the two storylines and the timing of both revelations seem very unlikely. There is no explanation, mystical or otherwise to account for the grand coincidence. The real problem for me in this book was the unnecessary adult subject matter in a book identified as written for 10 year olds and up?!? Do our ten year olds really need to have known from a glance inside her robe that Mrs. Zender was not a natural blonde? Does a ten year old really need a lesson on dramatic performances of "itches and boys"? I could add to the list of elements that were too mature, not just morally, in the story such as domestic violence, marriages of convenience, excessive drinking, ... that don't seem appropriate - let alone interesting - to a ten year old. The novel was very intellectual with biographical sketches of artists and historical details of Hitler's response to "degenerate art". While other horrifying aspects of the Holocaust certainly make that issue pale in comparison, it was another aspect of the time that add to our knowledge bank...one that I've personally never heard about. Again, however, are prolific details about dead artists, from their palette to brush styles, interesting to a ten year old? Doubt it. Overall, I am impressed with the author's obvious intellect and

ability to depict well-developed characters and stories. I'm just disappointed with the insertion of completely irrelevant subject matter. Some of it was relevant - the homosexual "pink badge", for instance, was another aspect of the Holocaust that I'd never heard about. Other mature subjects, however, were just not important to the plot at all and took the novel out of the intended age range.

This book is about a new and strong friendship formed between two twelve year old boys, Amedeo and William, when helping William's mother, who owns an Estate Sales Company. Amedeo and his mother, a Cell Phone Executive, had just moved to St. Malo, Florida. Everyday after school, the two boys sorted through and inventory the old treasures owned by Mrs. Zender, Amedeo's eccentric and once wealthy neighbor, for an estate sale in her run-down mansion. With each room and each item, Mrs. Zender revealed her past. Throughout the book, William and Amedeo's friendship was weakened, strengthened, and tested. In the mean time, Peter Vanderwaal, Amedeo's godfather, was hosting an exhibit of Degenerate Art, modern art prohibited by the Nazi's, at the Sheboygan Art Center in Wisconsin. Through a sketch done by a famous Jewish Degenerate artist, Modigliani (1884-1920), which Amedeo found in Mrs. Zender's house, the characters are connected. The book is full of vivid descriptions, especially of Mrs. Zender, and has an exciting plot twist at the end, which I won't spoil for you! You can just see Mrs. Zender waltzing through her house, in her Opera costume of the day. In addition, it was interesting how the author showed different perspectives of the meaning of righteousness. Mrs. Vanderwaal thought that there were no excuses not to do the right thing; that the world revolves around rules that we must follow in our lives. William and William's mother just worried about staying in business, even if it meant being walked-over or looking the other way. Mrs. Zender, who was spoiled and entitled, didn't mind breaking rules, or the law. She was just bending it a little, and believed that there is no good and bad, just an in-between. Finally, Amedeo didn't really care about what was right and what was wrong, just his goal of discovering something that was lost, but not missed, just like his heroes had done. The only negative thing about this book is that the title is too long and not catchy. What a mouthful!!!

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