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Serafina And The Black Cloak (Fiction - Middle Grade)



Synopsis

This is the story of a brave and unusual girl who lives secretly in the basement of the grand Biltmore Estate amidst the splendor of the Gilded Age and the rugged beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Serafina and her friend Braeden Vanderbilt must work together to solve a dark and dangerous mystery. This page-turning thriller from Disney-Hyperion is a #1 New York Times Bestseller and has appeared on the bestsellers list for more than 25 weeks. It also won the prestigious 2016 Pat Conroy Southern Book Prize for "representing the best in Southern literature." A blend of history, mystery, and magic, this new series has become a favorite for kids, teachers, parents, and readers of all ages (8+). Be sure to watch the book trailer in the media section below.

"Never go into the forest, for there are many dangers there, and they will ensnare your soul." Serafina has never had a reason to disobey her pa and venture beyond the grounds of Biltmore Estate. There's plenty to explore in Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt's vast and opulent home, but she must take care to never be seen. None of the rich folk upstairs know that Serafina exists; she and her pa, the estate's maintenance man, have lived in the basement for as long as Serafina can remember. She has learned to prowl through the darkened corridors at night, to sneak and hide, using the mansion's hidden doors and secret passageways. But when children at the estate start disappearing, only Serafina knows the clues to follow. A terrifying man in a black cloak stalks Biltmore's corridors at night. Following her own harrowing escape, Serafina risks everything by joining forces with Braeden Vanderbilt, the young nephew of Biltmore's owners. Braeden and Serafina must uncover the Man in the Black Cloak's true identity before all of the children vanish one by one. Serafina's hunt leads her into the very forest that she has been taught to fear, where she discovers a forgotten legacy of magic. In order to save the children of Biltmore, Serafina must not only face her darkest enemy, but delve into the strange mystery of her own identity.

Book Information

File Size: 7971 KB

Print Length: 305 pages

Publisher: Disney Hyperion (July 14, 2015)

Publication Date: July 14, 2015

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00RY6YXPG

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #5,743 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #2 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Children's eBooks > Mysteries & Detectives > Fantasy & Supernatural #2 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Children's eBooks > Action & Adventure > Animals #2 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Children's eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1800s

Customer Reviews

LOVED this book. Where should I start? Serafina catapulted me into that rare surreal distracted state when you have fallen headlong into a read. If you have a block of time to finish it cover-to-cover in a sitting or two, you will. When I closed it up I thought, now wait, what kind of book was this, anyway? I considered Neil Gaiman, Roald Dahl, Lemony Snicket, and Harry Potter. A dash of Downton Abbey? It's a young adult book, but I loved it for myself (a woman of a certain age.) I came to young adult books like many people after reading to my kids and encouraging them to read over the years. (They are now 13, 17 and 20). All of us loved mysteries and scary stories, but for mom, the historical fiction part was a big plus. I never understood why people wouldn't like this genre, unless the storytelling is bad. Serafina is a great read but also provides an infusion of knowledge about life at the Biltmore Estate circa 1899. I have a friend who argues, "but I would just rather read the history book." I say with historical fiction that you and your kids are officially in the know about a new topic, enriched and smarter for it. It can be a starting point for further books and film and even a field trip. (In this case the Biltmore Estate.) Serafina the heroine is a teen-age girl struggling with her identity and place in the world. Her journey reflects universal feelings of angst we all have "in middle school and beyond. They are timeless struggles. The villain is the wonderfully bone-chilling and "Neil Gaimanish" man in the black cloak. It is definitely creepy, but awesomely creepy. Serafina's character was so darn likeable and tenacious that it added a dimension of warmth and light that diffused the scary part sufficiently.

I had started to hear wonderful things about Serafina and the Black Cloak, so I was very excited about the opportunity to read it. This middle grade novel was written by Robert Beatty. Serafina lives

in the basement of the Biltmore Estate with her father, who works as a mechanic. No one knows they live there, and no one knows that Serafina even exists. She is supposed to stay hidden, but she cannot resist sneaking around at night. Serafina takes pride in her rôle as chief rat catcher, but one night, she sees something utterly terrifying in the vast basement of the estate. She sees a man in a black cloak chase down a little girl, and make her disappear. Serafina is spotted, and narrowly escapes with her life. She tells her father about what she has seen, but her father scolds her and tells her that she has been dreaming. He warns her about the dangers of being spotted- no one knows she exists- and he would be fired if they were discovered living in the basement. As the search for the missing girl intensifies, Serafina knows that what she saw was real, and not just her imagination running wild. She strikes up a friendship with young Braeden Vanderbilt. She has never had a friend before, but she has read about them in books. Working together, the two children are determined to stop the mysterious man in the black cloak before he claims more victims. I loved everything about this book. Serafina is such a delightful little protagonist; she is strong, and brave, and resourceful. Her first encounter with the man in the black cloak provide her with not only with the determination to find out who is but also the motivation to find out who she is and why she and her father have to live secretly in the basement.

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