

2-2018

The Marvelous Adventures of Gwendolyn Gray

Maggie Mason Smith

Clemson University, mason5@clemson.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/lib_pubs

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mason Smith, Maggie, "The Marvelous Adventures of Gwendolyn Gray" (2018). *Publications*. 172.
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/lib_pubs/172

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the University Libraries at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.

the world. By calculation, Maggie is born in the 1990s, but the Vienna setting feels more like the early 19th century; this is an atmospheric and ethereal tale. Final art not seen. **VERDICT** An unexpected page-turner, this will appeal to readers who like emotional poignancy with their adventure.—*Clare A. Dombrowski, Amesbury Public Library, MA*

WHITMAN, Emily. *The Turning*. 400p. HarperCollins. Jul. 2018. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 9780062657954; ebk. \$9.99. ISBN 9780062657978.

Gr 5-8 His human heritage, from his father, has Aran's clan worried that he will never turn into a true selkie. Aran's own conviction that his change is imminent doesn't waver, but readers will fear for his clan and for him as they undertake risks to garner help for Aran. The tight-knit clan includes his Mam, Grandmam, the leader Lyr, as well as the selkies Maura, Mist, and Cormac. Living and eating off the sea provides Aran with skills and abilities unusual for a human but still much less than any pure selkie. In this murky world, Aran waits and suspense builds. As he enters into the human world, Aran must not only navigate strange new ways but learn to build connections outside his clan. While much could be made of the parallels to puberty, Whitman keeps that aspect subtle and the adventure uppermost. There is a lyrical quality to the text at times, while the inclusion of doubloons and sharks are likely to provide appeal. In addition to the selkie myths and legends upon which Whitman's story is based, she also tackles the reality of living with an alcoholic parent and navigating friendships. Whitman keeps the suspense high and delivers a satisfying conclusion. **VERDICT** A wonderful selection for readers ready to dip their toes into variations on myths and legends without the mayhem and adult themes that often accompany the original tales.—*Carol A. Edwards, Formerly at Denver Public Library*

Wild Swan. adapted by Xanthe Gresham Knight. illus. by Charlotte Gastaut. 48p. Barefoot. Mar. 2018. pap. \$9.99. ISBN 9781782853466.

Gr 5-7—In this retelling of the Andersen tale, key plot points are changed, ultimately making this a feminist story of hope. Eliza is the youngest of 12 and the only daughter of the king, a widower. When she is five, Eliza's father marries a healer, who is almost as busy as he is, dealing with the plague that is sweeping the land. Her stepmother is surrounded by books and herbs and is often found digging in the garden. While the king thinks that studying should be enough for the brothers to learn how to rule, the stepmother thinks the boys should see the world and be part of it to properly rule one day. She casts a spell that turns the brothers into swans

so they can fly away from the plague and see the world. To protect Eliza, her stepmother sends her to foster with Alma and Luca in a village the plague has not yet reached. Eventually, her stepmother sends a message to Eliza telling her that she has indeed found a cure for the plague, but has caught it herself. It is now up to Eliza to break the spell that enchants her brothers. Lush illustrations add moodiness and feeling to the story. The palette alternates between rich, dark blues and small black-and-white pieces with gold foil lending a sumptuous touch. **VERDICT** A gorgeously designed package housing a fresh, feminist retelling of a classic.—*Stacy Dillon, LREI, New York*

WILLIAMSON, B.A. *The Marvelous Adventures of Gwendolyn Gray*. 300p. Jolly Fish. May 2018. pap. \$11.99. ISBN 9781631631726.

Gr 5-7—Twelve-year-old Gwendolyn is a dreamer with the misfortune of living in the City—a gray metropolis of metal, stone, and conformity. Gwendolyn's fiery red hair and wild imagination set her apart from the other inhabitants, but when her fantasies begin to physically change the world around her, Gwendolyn finds herself being followed by two faceless gentlemen intent on erasing not only her changes, but Gwendolyn herself. She flees, but with a little help from friends found along the way, she resolves to save herself, the City, and every other world as well. Gwendolyn is a well developed character: she longs for a colorful, carefree life and she works to recognize her flaws, define her own feelings, be true to herself, and make the best decisions. Williamson successfully grounds the work both in fantastical and dystopian settings, making otherworldly markets and steampunk pirates in airships fit perfectly alongside more common themes such as building lasting friendships and the first hint of romance. Complementing the plot and main character is a narrator who subverts conventional clichés through engaging asides to encourage the imagination of even reluctant readers. **VERDICT** A fresh consideration of the power of imagination; hand this to kids with vivid minds of their own.—*Maggie Mason Smith, Clemson University, SC*

ZHANG, Kat. *The Memory of Forgotten Things*. 288p. S. & S./Aladdin. May 2018. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 9781481478656.

Gr 5-8—Sometimes our lives are not what we expect them to be. Zhang explores what it would be like to live an alternate version of our lives; one that we would wish for. Sophia has a few precious memories of her mother, including a joy-filled memory of the cake her mother made for Sophia's 10th birthday. Unfortunately, the memory can't possibly be real; her mom died when she was six. Nevertheless, Sophia holds on dearly to these re-

What can be accomplished when schools and public libraries partner to provide better access to books and materials for all kids?

LIBRARYJOURNAL

School Library Journal

STRONGER TOGETHER

Building Literacy-Rich Communities

MAY 10–12, 2018

UNIVERSITY OF
NEBRASKA OMAHA

KEYNOTE



Chelsea Clinton
Author and Vice Chair of
the Clinton Foundation

Register now at
SLJ.com/LiteracyRich

Copyright of School Library Journal is the property of Media Source, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.