



Three Pennies

Melanie Crowder

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A girl in foster care tries to find her birth mother before she loses her forever in this spare and beautifully told novel about last chances and new opportunities.

For a kid bouncing from foster home to foster home, *The Book of Changes* is the perfect companion. That's why Marin carries three pennies and a pocket-sized *I Ching* with her everywhere she goes. Yet when everything in her life suddenly starts changing—when Marin lands in a foster home that feels like somewhere she could stay, maybe forever—the pennies don't have any answers for her.

Marin is positive that all the wrongs in her life will be made right if only she can find her birth mother and convince her that they belong together. Marin is close, oh so close—until she gets some unwelcome news and her resolve, like the uneasy Earth far beneath the city of San Francisco, is shaken.

Three Pennies Details

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Author : Melanie Crowder

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From Reader Review Three Pennies for online ebook

Alison says

This was overall a really cute read about a young girl in the foster system and a woman who really wants a kid. There are four different points of view going on through this, which is amazing considering how short it is and how well everyone's personalities were conveyed. I thought this handled the emotions of a foster kid fairly well (though I have no experience in that) especially with feelings of denial and abandonment. This also shared light on a woman who really wanted a kid but wasn't sure how to handle the situations. There is also the point of view from an owl and the social worker on the girl's case.

This was also more of a poetic read and I would be worried if really young readers would be able to grasp some of the language and meanings. The one thing that really kept this from being a five star is that I still have NO IDEA what the owl's point of view was suppose to be for. I gained nothing from it and it didn't really progress the story.

Michele Knott says

I loved how the story was written with the different narrators and what each narrator contributed to the story. The quick pace had me finishing this book quickly, yet it already landed a spot in my heart.

Aliza Werner says

Beautifully crafted in its storytelling and delicately handled in its subject matter. Abandoned by her mother at a young age, Marin has bounced from foster home to foster home. When her social worker brings her the news that a woman is interested in adopting her, Marin wonders if her birth mother might still actually want her back. Like the San Francisco ground beneath her feet, her future may be on shaky ground. Perhaps the best thing to do is to hold tight to the most steady thing in her life.

Martha says

Three Pennies is a lyrical tale about a foster child who dreams of someday finding her birth mother and living a happily-ever-after ending, comes alive under the skillful storytelling of Melanie Chowder. Since the age of four, foster child, Marin has been shuffled through the foster care system, living in less than satisfactory conditions every time. When she finally is assigned to Gilda Blackbourne a no-nonsense, rule oriented case worker, who must pick the best home for her next foster placement, she doesn't appreciate Gilda's skill. Reticent and unfriendly, Marin doesn't make her next placement a smooth one, even though the case worker has done her research about Marin's needs carefully. Parallel to Marin's new placement is the constant restlessness of the San Francisco earthquake's rumblings beneath her, AND an owl that watches Marin's activities with concern, ever protective of her waif like charge. The pacing of this story is masterful, mesmerizing the reader with concern for the child's safety and her ominous future. A beautiful tale full of possibilities, until the very end.

Tamara says

After reading Three Pennies, I can say that Melanie Crowder's books will always have a place on the shelves in my 5/6 classroom. They are great stories, well told. I categorized Three Pennies as "realistic" even with occasional chapters from an owl's perspective, mostly because it's not the fanciful world that I fell in love with in A Nearer Moon. Three Pennies is a tribute to foster kids and the good-hearted adults, both social workers and foster parents, who work hard to find them homes.

Mary Sanchez says

Marin lives in San Francisco and is going to undergo a big change, after living in foster homes for many years. A single, Asian woman doctor is interested in possibly adopting Marin but Marin wants to find her birth mother first and convince her that they can still be a family. When Marin moves in with the doctor, she searches for her mother, using her own name as a clue. Then, shifts take place in Marin's life, just like the shifting tectonic plates in the Bay area.

This story is told from the viewpoints of three main characters: Marin; the social worker, Gilda, and an owl.

Ms. Yingling says

E ARC from Edelweiss Above the Treeline

Marin has been in a foster home since she was four and her mother abandoned her. She has never given up hope that her mother will return, and carries a piggy bank and a copy of the I Ching with her to remind her of her mother. When her new social worker, Gilda, tells Marin that her mother has terminated parental rights, freeing Marin to be adopted, Marin decides that she will do everything she can to make herself unpleasant. She is placed with Lucy Chang, a doctor who has suffered her own losses but who feels that taking in a child would be the right thing to do. She is unsure of her own abilities, but willing to work with Marin to make a home for the two of them. Marin still wants to find her mother, and manages to get enough information from Gilda's files to hunt down a friend of her mother's who provides her with information she thinks will allow her to find her mother-- on her birthday, her mother scatters wishes off a seaside cliff near her San Francisco home. Marin is determined to go there to confront her mother. Her timing is bad, however; there is an earthquake, and Lucy is panicked and sets off to find her with Gilda. Will Marin be able to put her past behind her and move on?

Strengths: This is beautifully crafted... think Newbery possibilities. It is a spare and moving novel of one girl's search for family told in an intriguing way. I was really interested in Marin's story, so this was a quick read. Not surprised that other titles by this author are in verse. I liked the inclusion of the earthquake. It was very realistic.

Weaknesses: The parts with the owl were odd, and there were a lot of coincidences. I was also a bit disturbed by the portrayal of Marin's foster homes that were only taking in children in order to make the rent.

What I really think: People who liked Pax and Sometimes a Fox will adore this lyrical, introspective novel of love and loss. I was intrigued by Marin's story, but the style was rather odd, and I don't think it will resonate with my students.

Tricia Douglas says

Actual rating: 4.5 Marin has been shuffled through foster homes and now has the possibility of being adopted. Using I Ching and three pennies she tries to answer and solve her problems and fears of change that revolve around her. She still hopes to find her birth mother and find out why she left Marin on her own. A good book about a topic many children would like to read about.

The Reading Countess says

Poetic. Gorgeous tale about being open to love despite your weariness of being hurt. While our past colors our present, it doesn't have to define us in ways that we don't wish it to. We can be mothered by people other than the one who birthed us, and we can detect and even accept when motherhood doesn't fit the person we called 'mother.' Broken wings can heal. Hearts can be filled. Flipped pennies can all turn up heads.

Highly recommended

The writing reminded me of MAYBE A FOX.

Cassie Thomas says

"You and I are like two halves of a bone trying to connect after a bad break." This story pulled on my heart strings big time. I can absolutely relate to Marin in so many ways. I love the intertwined messages of the Owl's thoughts, Marin, and Gilda (the social worker). This story is in our #MockNewbery and it's one that will definitely give the students opportunities to think deeply.

Christina Hanson says

"The bird who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones." This is just one bit of wisdom from the owl in @melanieacrowder's latest book, Three Pennies.

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Marin has been bounced around foster homes since she was four years old. Despite all of her moves, she always carries with her three pennies and a book, I Ching (The Book of Changes). Now that she's eleven, Marin is becoming even more curious as to who her birth mother is, and thinks if she finds her, Marin can convince her they belong together. But things start to suddenly change for Marin when her most recent foster home is a place she thinks could call home permanently. And now every time she flips her three pennies, the I Ching isn't giving her the answers she wants. Marin's future is becoming just as uncertain as the San Andreas Fault beneath San Francisco.

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Set in San Francisco and told from the perspectives of Marin; Gilda, a social worker; Lucy, a doctor and Marin's current foster mother; and Owl, Three Pennies is a wonderfully told story of curiosity, determination, and hope. With its short chapters, this would make a great read aloud, and one that I'll be adding to our Mock Newbery in the fall.

Sherry Guice says

A very quick and beautiful read...alternating story of a young girl who is struggling to find her mother and the owl who watches it all...

Amber says

I adored this book. It's perfect for my fourth graders. Told from three perspectives and in poetic prose, this is perfect for readers that are ready for something deep and real, yet appropriate for their age and sensitivity. I will definitely be adding this to my list for Mock Newbery 2017. ?

Amy says

While my rating was only 3 stars, I do think that plenty of other people might like this book more than I did. The story was just a bit too slow/ephemeral for me, especially considering its intended audience (middle grade readers).

Marin is on a mission to find her mother. The mother who walked away from her when she was 4 years old. The mother who has not ever tried to contact her. The mother who has signed papers officially giving her up and allowing adoption proceedings to begin. Marin is sure that if she can just find her mother everything will be OK. But, as the side story of plate tectonics warns the reader, eventually all of the pressure and tension has to have a release. And it isn't usually peaceful.

This was a book for middle grade readers that read like literature. I just wasn't a huge fan. I would recommend for purchase if a school/teacher had a plan for using it in lit circles or if there were strong, young readers who needed some realistic fiction choices.

Scott Fillner says

Short chapters, different perspectives, sage advice, opportunities 4 discussion, & strong writing. Yes, I am putting this on my #MockNewbery
