



Found Things

Marilyn Hilton

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Experience the wonder of the river in this haunting debut novel, where family is lost, friends are found, and hope runs in the current. One morning, River Rose Byrne wakes up talking like nobody else, and she doesn't know why. Maybe it's because her beloved older brother, Theron, has abruptly vanished. Maybe it's because that bully Daniel Bunch won't leave her alone. Or maybe it has everything to do with the eerily familiar house that her mind explores when she's asleep, and the mysterious woman who lives there. River has to puzzle through these mysteries on her own until she makes a strange new friend named Meadow Lark. But when she brings Meadow Lark home and her mother reacts in a way that takes River by surprise, River is more lost than before. Now all that's left for her to do is make wish after wish; and keep her eyes open for a miracle. Marilyn Hilton's haunting debut dives down deep into murky waters brimming with secrets, sorrow, and hope, giving us faith in the things that we seek, but haven't yet found.

Found Things Details

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From Reader Review Found Things for online ebook

Karen Arendt says

A quiet story that unfolds one small bit at a time. River is adopted and her older brother ran off several months ago. She spends time at the river near her house and collects things she has found, but what she wants to find, and can't, is her brother Theron. She friends a new girl named Meadow Lark who has her own secrets. Ultimately this is a wonderful story about family, the love we share, and the secrets we keep because of our love. I enjoyed how the story played out, generating new questions or wondering about the characters.

Bethe says

bookaday #50. Lots of questions while reading this book... I like the line from the first page: "miracles are what's left after everything else is used up."

Kristi says

This is a lyrical children's novel about the things we wish for and the things we find. It is well-written, with compelling force and flow. Most readers will likely figure out the mysteries before the main character does, but the writing and characters are engrossing enough that the reader will want to keep reader to see if their summations are correct.

There are a few minor weakness. The metaphor of the river, which is central to this story, is overt and potentially over-laden for some readers' taste; I noticed this, but was not personally bothered by it. More significantly, I wished the conclusion had been more fully articulated. An abrupt ending makes for a dissatisfying and shallow terminus to the deepening and eddying journeys of mutual discovery that the reader has been on with the characters. It is not the specific resolutions of the various plot points that is wanting, but the stark suddenness with which the main character encounters the answers she has sought that awkwardly disturbs the naturalness of the plot flow until that point by summarily winding up in a few pages conclusion that the entire novel has been building towards. This felt flat, rather than emotionally rewarding. As a reader, I felt pulled out of the current of the story just before it ended, when I longed to be carried all the way through the last page. Still, this was a wonderful book, with endearing characters, evocative imagery, and emotional depth.

Rebecca says

For some reason, I thought this book was about a kid who found things and something actually magical happened. It is not. I realized that a few chapters in but kept reading anyway. I almost didn't make it a few chapters because of the weird verbiage thing though. This is a sweet book about friendship and family and just the different ways love can look. It didn't take long to read, and I liked it.

Donna says

This has got to be an award winner! What a beautiful, story that keeps you reading and wanting. The cast of characters is so well knitted together with edgy and colorful thread. I loved it! This is a first novel for the author and I surely do look forward to seeing more from her.

Nurhayati Ramlan says

3.5 stars

Sara Hinchliff says

Can wishes change our lives? Can wishing bring back to us the things we have lost?

River Rose Bryne wishes to find “a friend that is almost like a sister”. She wishes to find her run-away brother. She wishes to find the missing pieces of her own past. She wishes the class bully would leave her alone. River finds she isn’t the only one who wishes. As she and new friend Meadow Lark send their wishes floating along the river, the river seems almost to answer.

Marilyn Hilton’s Found Things offers a wealth of talking points ideal for a fourth to sixth grade classroom read aloud. Hilton incorporates both common and not so common obstacles tweens encounter in this realistic fiction story. Bullying, and River’s interesting response to it, is a wonderful topic for further analysis and understanding that people are neither bad nor good. We might just find that our differences don’t matter as much as we think and that these differences connect us in ways we never imagined.

River also has many items, “found things”, given to her by the river that she uses to create a collage of her life. What items, memories, or wishes do we carry around that shape the collage of our own lives?

JMRL says

This middle grade novel is the story of River Rose Byrne, a girl who searches for a miracle by sending wishes down the river. Find it at JMRL: <http://aries.jmrl.org/record=b1310951~S9>

Karen says

Lyrical, quiet and dreamlike, this introspective book about secrets, loss, and hope, conveys bottled-up emotion. What would it feel like to be adopted, but not allowed to ask about your biological mother? What would it feel like to have your older brother walk out of your life? The main character is an 11 year-old girl assembling a collage from bits and pieces of objects she finds along the river bank. She befriends the new girl in school who teaches her how to make wishes by writing them on strips of paper or thinking them onto caught feathers and floating them on the river.

"You have to make a big, crazy wish that you'd never, ever believe would come true. It has to be so big and crazy that it hurts to make and would break your heart if it didn't come true."

Perfect for an upper elementary student looking for a short book to use in an alternative format report, Found Things is tailor-made for a collage: either wishes on strips of paper, upcycled objects, or both.

Beautiful phrasing:

"Secrets are holy things."

"Wishes floated everywhere."

"Miracles are what's left after everything else is used up."

"I always felt like a song in the wrong key."

I loved the quiet mysteries. Is the house in River's mind imaginary? a dream? or a memory? Why did she wake up one day speaking in dialect? But there's one mystery I wish had been explored more fully: Meadow Lark.

Lauren says

The story follows young River Rose Byrne in the wake of a tragedy - her brother Theron, accused of drunk driving, has disappeared after driving his car into the river with a classmate inside. After the accident, River Rose's life is turned upside down. She now speaks with a strange accent, her mother and father are subdued and sad, and her classmates all hate her because of what her brother is accused of doing. In addition, River Rose is struggling to learn about her birth mother and why she has suddenly begun dreaming in detail about a house she feels is utterly familiar.

Then into her life enters Meadow Lark, or as her classmates call her, Frankenfemme. Meadow Lark is mysterious in every way - she is disfigured, covered in scars, with one good eye and one good leg, and brings with her from Arizona a whole new mystery. When she comes to live with River Rose, the girls are determined to solve the mysteries in River Rose's life - and to grant the wishes of the people they love.

The story is a short read for an adult, partly because it's a short book, and partly because it's a compelling read. Meadow Lark remains a mystery until the end. Filled with unreliable narrators and mystery, the big plot twist will become obvious to adult readers fairly early - but it doesn't make it any less enjoyable to read as it unfolds. Some will pick up on the undertones of religion, magic, and psychological issues that have an effect on both girls which add another layer to the story.

Mary says

River's family is broken hearted when her brother runs away from home. Then River makes a new friend and everything changes. There is some question about Meadow Lark's identity that will leave the reader wondering. A thoughtful book about family secrets, angels, and wishes.

Tammi Drevers says

The first sentence of this book made me hate it, but I decided to keep reading. Thank goodness I did. The story just kept getting better and better. I felt the author left one characters storyline just hanging at the end and I did not like that. All in all I liked the book.

Angie Fehl says

For quite awhile now, River Rose Byrne has been wondering about and searching for her missing brother, Theron. In the meantime, she befriends mysterious, somewhat odd Meadow Lark Frankenfield, "her name was one of the only pretty things about her." Author Marilyn Hilton's description of Meadow Lark includes "a popped out eye" and "a strange way of walking".

As the story progresses, there are quiet character traits of River that the reader comes to see as a result (side effect?) of the trauma of Theron's disappearance, one being her taking up the habit of intentionally filling her speech with poor grammar. To help heal River's spirit, Meadow Lark teaches her the trick of writing down wishes and sending them down the river near the town library. Sidenote: I loved the imagery of a library set up next to a river!

One of the fun elements that keeps this story moving is the sense of mystery Hilton writes around the character of Meadow Lark, all the questions around her origin story. Is there some true magic to her? Why does River's mother respond so powerfully to her?

One of River wishes is for the school bully to disappear. When said bully ends up in the hospital, River is surprised... maybe gives a glance in Meadow Lark's direction, but then reminds herself that she doesn't believe in things like magic / angels / miracles, so it's just a wild coincidence! Right?

As River's emotions regarding her missing brother continue to escalate, overflowing to the point of affecting other aspects of her life, Meadow Lark is there to teach her the importance of maintaining hope & faith -- even just a grain of it -- in life.

There was such a wonderful sense of childhood magic and whimsy infused into this book! There's a dreamlike quality that runs through the whole thing, but also quite a bit of depth when it comes to incorporated themes. Quite a feat for a debut novel! If you are a fanatic for beautiful language and all things lyrical, I highly encourage you to seek out Found Things and give it go!

Indi says

very touching book. makes you hold onto friendship and family even more. because everyday is a treasure. I love how meadow lark is so head strong and how she brings friendship to river

Sand-Witch says

Entertaining story. I liked it, but didn't love it all the way. Pretty cool story. The main characters are sweet and the story was smooth flowing. There was a back mystery to it and I loved how it spread out. Hate to say this, but i felt like there was some magic missing from it. Still love how it is written. Beautiful story.
