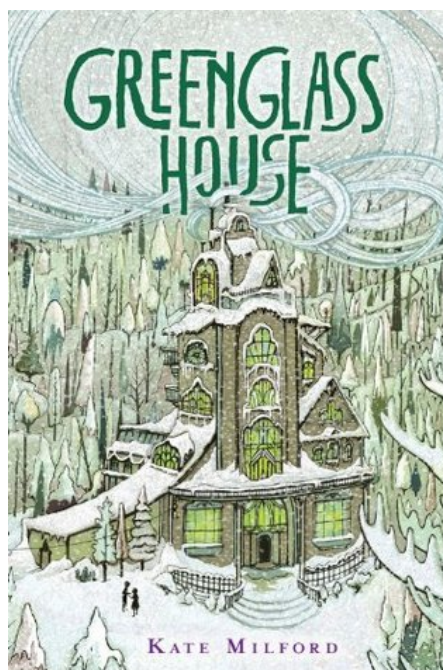




Greenglass House

Kate Milford , Jaime Zollars (Illustrator)

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New York Times Bestseller

National Book Award Nominee

Winner of the Edgar Award for Best Juvenile Mystery

It's wintertime at Greenglass House. The creaky smuggler's inn is always quiet during this season, and twelve-year-old Milo, the innkeepers' adopted son, plans to spend his holidays relaxing. But on the first icy night of vacation, out of nowhere, the guest bell rings. Then rings again. And again. Soon Milo's home is bursting with odd, secretive guests, each one bearing a strange story that is somehow connected to the rambling old house. As objects go missing and tempers flare, Milo and Meddy, the cook's daughter, must decipher clues and untangle the web of deepening mysteries to discover the truth about Greenglass House—and themselves.

Greenglass House Details

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From Reader Review Greenglass House for online ebook

Emily says

I really liked this and found it charming - it's sort of a more positive Lemony Snicket mixed with Diana Wynne Jones. I'd love to know what middle grade readers think of it, though, because while I found the themes explored to be done well (adoption and family), it did read like an adult writing for children. Milo and Meddy both display slightly too much emotional maturity, especially when it doesn't matter - the small things like Milo getting frustrated and Meddy saying something like, "I know, it frustrates me too" stand out. But in general, this is a great addition to a children's library. If anyone has a tween that wants to join my Kate Milford book club, just shout.

Sherwood Smith says

What a lovely, lovely book! All my life I have adored books about huge houses full of secrets, and this one adds smugglers and mystery and a search, and a delightfully spiky but tender friendship between a couple of lonely kids full of questions and longings. Their problems are very different, but each does his or her best for the other and they make a terrific sleuth team. I loved the central family--indeed, what the book had to say about families.

I loved the peculiar characters, each of whom developed over the course of the book, and then there was the breathtaking twist.

I hate to say more, lest I tread into spoiler territory, but this was such a satisfying read.

Elizabeth Mallory says

Wow. This is an fun, sensitive, exciting, brainy middle-grade mystery: an adventure story with twists and turns abounding. Everything is connected and nothing is as it--or who--it seems.

So well-written, it weaves together vibrant characters, a fascinating plot, and important themes about family, adoption, and (less obviously) OCD. Definitely will reread.

Heidi says

Sure, Greenglass House barreled its way into the top spot for my Middle Grade picks of the year for a number of reasons. It's gorgeous artwork, it's beautifully crafted mystery, it's stories and friendships and love--these are all reasons I adored this book, but there was one that stood out to me: Greenglass House is a book about adoption...and it's not.

I myself was adopted as a baby, and grew up knowing as much. After seeing any number of made for TV dramas (Felicity anyone?) in which the grown child finds out their parents are not truly "their own" and then spiral into an unparalleled identity crisis and cesspool of betrayed feelings, I'm quite grateful for the openness of my family. And not in a "This is our adopted daughter, Margot." kind of way. My parents made

it special, giving me “Heidi Day”, the day I was adopted, as a sort of second birthday to celebrate each year. We still do, if only through a phone call.

Like Milo in Greenglass House, I never felt a lack of love because of my adoption, in fact, I felt an overabundance of it. My parents wanted me in their lives so badly they waited years to make me a part of their family. They went through the emotional roller coaster and red tape of adoption (not once, but twice—my older brother is adopted as well), to make certain that I had the best home and family they could give. I never once felt like my biological mother didn’t love me, quite the opposite. I knew that she loved me so much she was willing to give me up because she couldn’t provide the home and family she wanted for me.

I’ve never known much about my biological parents—they were always some vague statistics on a certificate to me. Height, age, hair and eye color, ethnic origin (which is “mixed European” and doesn’t do much for one’s ethnic identity btw), that’s about it. Honestly, I’ve given very little thought to my biological father. I know that my mother was 19, and a freshman in college, and I can’t help but assume that he wasn’t really in the picture. My mother, on the other hand, I’ve considered a great deal. One of the things that has meant the most to me in life was a letter written to me by my biological mother that my parents gave to me on my 16th birthday, when they knew I was old enough to grasp everything therein (I was, after all, only 3 years younger at the time than the woman who wrote it). In the letter, my bio mother explained to me why she made the decision she did, and suffice it to say it came from a place of vast love rather than a place of not wanting.

This is the thing that meant so much to me about Greenglass House—the wondering. Milo loves his parents unquestionably—they’re his family. But as the adopted son of a different culture, he can’t help but wonder about his parents. And in Greenglass House, Kate Milford assures us that it’s okay to wonder. Sure, my identity crisis was a bit easier than Milo’s. While my biology is not almost entirely Norwegian and German like my family’s, I’m still white. We match in a way that I would have to tell someone for them to know that I was adopted (and frequently did as a child, much to my brother’s chagrin who hated people knowing we were adopted). But still—as I enter the phase of trying to create my own family, I can’t help but feel this astounding craving to have someone in my life who looks like me (to which my sister has laughed and pointed out that she puts red highlights in her hair just so people will stop asking if her daughter is adopted—she’s not, just doesn’t look like her mom at all). Milo—I get you.

Over the past couple of months, thanks to a wedding gift from a friend, I’ve joined 23 and Me which has given me an interesting look at my true ethnic history. Has it helped me feel identified? No, not really—I still identify as ethnically Norwegian, even though I’m only 6.9% Scandinavian, but it’s opened up a world of potential connections to me that I can’t help but find interesting and tempting. I don’t plan to use 23 and Me (or anything else) to actively track down my biological mother, but I’m open to the possibility that it could happen. Prior to reading Greenglass House, this always felt like a bit of a betrayal to my adoptive family, particularly my father. I don’t ever want to hurt him or have him feel as if I don’t love him more than anything by finding out about life before him. But in Greenglass House, which is in its way a letter to the Milford’s future adopted child, Milo is assured that his parents know he wonders, and more than that—they’re okay with it. I’m just betting, despite never having had the conversation, my dad’s okay with it too.

greenglass

I’ve only ever read two books I can think of in which the main character was adopted (and I mean adopted at birth, not in a tragic orphan finds a home Anne Shirley kind of way), and Greenglass House was one of them. Everyone in our community speaks toward the need of diverse books and one of the driving reasons is that everyone deserves to see a major part of themselves in a book. Not always—we use books to escape, and having different characters that we don’t relate to broadens our mindset and worldview—but each and every one of us deserves that at some point. For me, Greenglass House was able to reflect back a part of myself I’ve rarely had the opportunity to see.

I’m not sure I can really express how much that makes this book mean to me personally, but I’ve tried. It

means even more that while being adopted was a big part of Milo's identity, it wasn't really what Greenglass House was about. It's not really what I'm about either—it's just a building block, one piece of who I am as a person. An important one, but not everything.

So thank you, Kate Milford, for writing this book. For making adoption a part of it, and for telling me that it's okay to wonder.

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Greenglass House is available now from Clarion Books, and I couldn't encourage you more to go read it. It's beautiful, fun, suspenseful, and touching. It's been nominated for the Cybils Awards (even before I got to it), and has been long listed for the National Book Award.

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### **Mia (Parentheses Enthusiast) says**

Dear *Greenglass House*,

I am so very sorry, but it's just not working. I thought we were made for each other- smugglers, a creaky old stained-glass inn, winter vacation, mysterious thefts- it looked like everything I could want in a cozy little book. But as I read more and more, I just couldn't get into you. It seemed to be just kids dressing up and spying on guests, and while that's all well and good, I was looking for a more... mature relationship. I wanted a plot twist, or a hidden truth finally uncovered, *something* to move the story along from the wandering, meandering, overly leisurely pace it was taking. And I hate to say this, but- I just didn't care. Maybe it was the humid summer air, or the other books sending me seductive, beckoning glances from my to-read shelf, but by the hundredth page, I knew it was too late for us, *Greenglass House*.

I hope that someday I'll be able to try again. But for right now, I think we're better off apart. Another time, another place, another lifetime- maybe we'll be together then.

All my love,  
Mia

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### **Beth says**

*Greenglass House* is a winter book. It makes me think about cozy blankets and hot chocolate and snow days, very much like *The Dark is Rising* does - to the extent that when I snapped out of my reading haze, I was surprised to realize it was still summer and there *wasn't* snow on the ground.

So, setting and atmosphere. That's the first distinguished aspect of the novel. (In case the word "distinguished" makes you think of the Newbery: well, yes. Someone give this book a medal, please.)

*Greenglass House* isn't only about atmosphere. Its primary goal is to tell a great story, and so it's got a fabulous mystery, too, tied up in Milo's family and the inn that's the family business and the smugglers who are the primary guests. It's an intriguing blend of old and new elements - smugglers and ships and creaking train cars, lanterns and backup generators and role-playing games - and a timeless bit of secrecy and petty thievery. The book is clearly inspired by books that preceded it, and yet it's also its own beast, its own unique reading adventure.

And it is an adventure. It's a perfectly balanced, compulsively readable, wonderful adventure with an independent child protagonist who never strains plausibility.

Which brings me to the spoiler I want to discuss - and this is a *big* spoiler, so read the book and *then* come talk to me about this:

(view spoiler)

I do want to point out that there are certain inconsistencies from chapter to chapter - flames blown out twice, hats removed twice - which ordinarily would bother me a lot. And it's not that they don't bother me; it's just that the novel is so good at what it does that I can look away from the inconsistencies. Especially when there are lines like this:

"Nobody said it had to be a story with an ending all neatly tied up like some ridiculous fairy tale. This story's true, and true stories don't have endings, because things just keep going."

I haven't finished reading the Newbery manual, so I can't make a case for a medal armed with all the criteria - but the medal should honor great stories. And this is a great one.

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## Jacob Proffitt says

There was never any question in my mind that this would turn out to be a five-star review (once I started reading, at any rate). It's not that the book is atmospheric. It is, and strongly so. And it's not that the characters are immediately and intensely engaging. They are, and without stretching or warping. And it's not the flirtation with archetype, pastiche, and homage in the setup with smugglers, customs agents, and a company town. Though it does a fantastic job of both presenting them and reigning them in to a story you can nevertheless lose yourself in.

No, the power (for me) of this book is Milo and his parents. Their shared love and openheartedness show clearly on every page, but positively shine in Milo's interactions with the guests. He resents their intrusion on his vacation, but he's still kind and giving—while still remaining a believably twelve year-old kid. I loved his flourishing as Meddy encourages him to stretch with their roleplaying game. I loved how he experimented, safely, with identity and capability and story. And I loved how his parents supported and trusted him in his exploration and investigations.

But the book stuck the needle at the end of its five stars with Milo's haltingly conceived Christmas gifts. The beauty of those moments was powerful and moving and I'm tearing up again just remembering them. They were idealistic (as from a kid), thoughtful (as befits an emerging adult), brave (as from a truly open heart), and humble (as from someone learning his place in his world). Those moments touched me, and not least in Milo's parents' calm, stolid support.

Add in a handful of laugh-out-loud moments and you have a book I'm sure I'll be thinking about at odd moments for the next months. This was truly a fantastic read, entertaining, touching, and valued. I'm thinking our holiday budget might just extend to picking up a copy of our very own (as this one came from the local library).

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## Alexandra says

By now this book has a bazillion reviews, but I do want to mention a few of the things I really liked.

For starters, it's nice to read a MG story that has two loving and present parents for the MC. I understand why this often isn't the case as a plot device, but it's certainly nice to run into an exception.

I very much enjoyed the MC and friend pretending they were in a role playing game while sleuthing to solve the mysterious events at Greenglass house. It added charm and fun, and helped make the kids feel like real kids.

I also appreciated the fact that there is a positive message here about kids who are adopted, as well as honest feelings from an adopted kid, without being a "message" story. I think many writers can learn from books like this one how to incorporate thoughts and feelings kids can relate to, with positive, compassionate affirmation of those feelings, without resorting to making such things the main focus of the story. I find this treatment of an issue much more enjoyable, as it's more organic.

For the most part this story has a feel of being a bit fantastic while at the same time it's really doesn't contain any elements of Fantasy, with one notable exception we learn at the end.

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## Donalyn says

I wish Greenglass House was a real place!

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## Cheryl says

Utterly charming, with an old-fashioned vibe that gives the impression that it was the inspiration for The Westing Game rather than the other way round. I love all the made-up books and games and words... but I'm glad to learn that The Holly-Tree Inn by Charles Dickens is real, and I will be reading that. The name of Milo, of course, must be from The Phantom Tollbooth.

I love all the individual characters. Some are more simply sketched than others, but all add value. One, for example, just shows us how to offer comfort: "He didn't ask if Milo was okay, or if he needed a tissue, or if he wanted to be left alone for a little. He just stayed there and kept Milo company." Love that the parents are very present, very loving, but that Milo still gets to have as much adventure as if he were the stereotypical MG orphan.

The plot and the setting are fantastical, but in a good way, with the dichotomy of the juicy historical fantasy contrasted with the actual setting of the 'present day', but in an inn that apparently doesn't have TV or access to a cell-phone tower... it's all rather slippery....

I bet the audio is pretty good, but I'd avoid it. You don't want to miss the little illustrations, or the ability to flip back and check on something. You also want to have a cup of hot chocolate, or at least cider, while reading this, as the winter storm, and the measures the characters take to alleviate the chill, are characters in their own right. There's also an author's note explaining the background of the story, including an explanation of Milford's pending adoption of a Chinese orphan. (I wonder if it's gone through, and business

w/ that is slowing down production of the sequel.)

Normally I read only the first book of an adventure series because I don't like adventures and am just reading it for the world-building. But this is much more than an adventure, and so I'm thrilled to learn that a sequel to this is planned, and will reread this when I can get that. Also I learned that the author's other books are set in the same world and so I will investigate them.

I feel like I'm not doing the book justice, but rather than struggle to say something more, let me just highly recommend this to interested readers, with the caveat that it may not have universal appeal.

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### **Claire Legrand says**

You know when you finish reading a book and are left with this warm ache in your chest because what you read was just that perfectly magical? That's how I feel, having just finished GREENGLASS HOUSE. I didn't want it to end, and I know I'll visit this marvelous house and its bizarre inhabitants again and again and again. \*happy sigh\*

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### **Melissa McShane says**

I was drawn into this book very quickly and found it easy to keep reading without stopping. The ambience of this book is just superb, from the chilly winter setting to the old inn and all its inhabitants. Despite figuring out the twist early on--more because I am extremely suspicious than that it's obvious--I really enjoyed watching Milford play it out; she manages to hint at the truth without straining herself, and the ending was both sweet and terrifying. There's a good mystery and a fabulous cast of characters, though my favorite are still Milo and Meddy and their role-playing game/investigation. Milo uses his alter ego to good effect in exploring aspects of himself that he's afraid to entertain in real life, particularly his relationship between both his sets of parents. I really enjoyed this aspect of the book, because it wasn't heavy-handed; Milo isn't broody, his parents are accepting of his desire to know his birth family, but it's always clear that *they* are a family.

And the role-playing game. Seriously, who wouldn't want to play that? It's brilliantly conceived, down to the exploration of character archetypes that fit the traditional RPG mode, but with totally different names and attributes. I don't know if Milford is a gamer, or if she's just really tuned in to the culture, but I've rarely found such a believable made-up RPG in fiction.

But my favorite aspect of the story is the storytelling conceit, exploring the history and the plot without resorting to infodumping or tedious exposition. Each of the stories was interesting in itself as well as in its role in the larger plot. And what a way to expose kids to the concept of the Decameron or the Canterbury Tales! Very interesting, and very well done. I want to read more by this author.

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### **Chris says**

Summary (amazon.com)

It was supposed to be winter vacation. Though Milo's parents run an inn with a clientele that tends to include more than your average number of smugglers, he can always count on winter vacation to be bereft of guests.

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Yet in spite of the awful icy weather, a guest appears. Then another. Then two more. All told more than five guests appear with flimsy excuses for their arrival. Some seem to know one another. Others act suspiciously. And when thefts start to take place, Milo and his new friend Meddy decide to turn detective. Yet even as they unravel clues about their strange clientele there are always new ones to take their places. Someone is sabotaging the Greenglass House but it's the kids who will unmask the culprit.

What I liked:

The setting – Green Glass House itself, is spectacular – an old smugglers' inn noted for its beautiful stained glass windows, sitting at the top of a cliff reached by funicular. It's Christmas and the beautiful old house is decorated for the holidays. Green Glass House, with its many floors, secret spaces and treasures within, is almost a character in itself. A snowstorm rages outside, and the power goes out isolating the owners and guests and creating the perfect atmosphere for something mysterious and dangerous to occur. The vocabulary in the story is purposely high level – *puissance*, *glazier*, *raconteur*, - I had to Google these words among others. The book has gorgeous cover art perfectly suited to the story.

What I didn't like

There were too many characters, each with his/her own back-story. None were particularly likeable and their stories were long, and confusing. At one point, I started a list to keep things straight, but quickly gave up. There is not much fun in reading a book when you have to make a cheat sheet. When Meddy and Milo begin their role-playing game of Odd Trails, they take character names, which make things even more confusing since they are then referred to by their real and character names.

I have never participated in any role-playing games, so I did not connect with this part of the story, and how the game characters have certain powers and characteristics that help them succeed. I even began to Google some of the game names and terms; e.g.-Odd Trails, tiercer signaler, in the hope that I would gain some fresh insight or interest in the story. No such luck.

The pacing was excruciatingly slow. The chapters were excruciatingly long. It took forever for something to happen and I quickly lost interest. Green Glass House is one of the few children's books I could not finish – although I read the ending so see how the mystery resolves.

What Confused Me:

There is timelessness to the story, which suits the plot, but left me a bit confused. Is this set in modern times? There are no real modern conveniences, such as computers, texting, cell phones, or television. The location of the story is never clearly defined. Where is Green Glass House? Likewise, the history of smugglers in the area. When I think of smugglers, I think of them in the past tense. Are there still smugglers, and why is Green Glass house a haven for smugglers? Mr. and Mrs. Pine seem to be thoroughly up right characters that would not cater to smugglers. It took me several searches on Google to figure out that the setting for Green Glass House might be located in Nagspeak, a fictionalized town created by the author, Kate Milford on her website [nagspeake.com](http://nagspeake.com). In some ways, this book came across as a hybrid realistic fiction/fantasy mix but it was obviously much more fantasy, especially with the surprise ending that Meddy is really the ghost daughter of the notorious old smuggler Doc Holystone. (Who I also goggled – I did far too much goggling for this book.)

In Conclusion:

For me this was a very peculiar and confusing book. The premise was good and reminded me of an Agatha Christie type book – a group of characters isolated in an old mansion where something mysterious/murderous is going to happen. Green Glass house was highly reviewed by many (adults) and is even mentioned as a Newbery contender. However, because of the sophisticated vocabulary, confusing location, drawn out plot and many characters, I very much doubt that this book will have any kind of mass appeal with kids. There is no bad language or situations in this book. I think it could be read by both boys and girls in 5th grade and up.

## Betsy says

When I was a kid I had a real and abiding love of Agatha Christie. This would be around the time when I was ten or eleven. It wasn't that I was rejecting the mysteries of the children's book world. I just didn't have a lot to choose from there. Aside from *The Westing Game* or supernatural ghostly mysteries sold as Apple paperbacks through the Scholastic Book Fair, my choices were few and far between. Kids today have it better, but not by much. Though the Edgar Awards for best mystery fiction do dedicate an award for young people's literature, the number of honestly good mystery novels for the 9-12 set you encounter in a given year is minimal. When you find one that's really extraordinary you want to hold onto it. And when it's Kate Milford doing the writing, there's nothing for it but to enjoy the ride. A raconteur's delight with a story that'll keep 'em guessing, this is one title you won't want to miss.

It was supposed to be winter vacation. Though Milo's parents run an inn with a clientele that tends to include more than your average number of smugglers, he can always count on winter vacation to be bereft of guests. Yet in spite of the awful icy weather, a guest appears. Then another. Then two more. All told more than five guests appear with flimsy excuses for their arrival. Some seem to know one another. Others act suspiciously. And when thefts start to take place, Milo and his new friend Meddy decide to turn detective. Yet even as they unravel clues about their strange clientele there are always new ones to take their places. Someone is sabotaging the Greenglass House but it's the kids who will unmask the culprit.

To my mind, Milford has a talent that few authors can boast; She breaks unspoken rules. Rules that have been dutifully followed by children's authors for years on end. And in breaking them, she creates stronger books. *Greenglass House* is just the latest example. To my mind, three rules are broken here. Rule #1: Children's books must mostly be about children. Adults are peripheral to the action. Rule #2: Time periods are not liquid. You cannot switch between them willy-nilly. Rule #3: Parents must be out of the picture. Kill 'em off or kidnap them or make them negligent/evil but by all means get rid of them! To each of these, Milford thumbs her proverbial nose.

Let's look at Rule #1 first. It is worth noting that with the exception of our two young heroes, the bulk of the story focuses on adults with adult problems. It has been said (by me, so take this with a grain of salt) that by and large the way most authors chose to write about adults for children is to turn them into small furry animals (*Redwall*, etc.). There is, however, another way. If you have a small innocuous child running hither and thither, gathering evidence and spying all the while, then you can talk about grown-ups for long periods of time and few child readers are the wiser. If I keep mentioning *The Westing Game* it's because Ellen Raskin did very much what Milford is doing here, and ended up with a classic children's book in the process. So there's certainly a precedent.

On to Rule #2. One of the remarkable things about Kate Milford as a writer is that she can set a book in the present day (there *is* a mention of televisions in this book, so we can at least assume it's relatively recent) and then go and fill it with archaic, wonderful, outdated technology. A kind of alternate contemporary steampunk, if there is such a thing. In an era of electronic doodads, child readers are going to really get a kick out of a book where mysterious rusted keys, old doorways, ancient lamps, stained green glass windows, and other old timey elements give the book a distinctive flavor.

Finally, Rule #3. This was the most remarkable of choices on Milford's part, and I kept reading to book to find out how she'd get away with it. Milo's parents are an active part of his life. They clearly care for him, periodically checking up on his throughout the story, but never interfering with his investigations. Since the book is entirely set in the Greenglass House, it has the feel of a stage play (which, by the way, it would adapt to BRILLIANTLY). That means you're constantly running into mom and dad, but they don't feel like they're hovering. This is partly aided by the fact that they're incredibly busy. So, in a way, Milford has discovered a way of removing parental involvement without removing parental care. The kids are free to explore and

solve crimes and the adult gatekeepers reading this book are comforted by the family situation. A rarity if ever there was one.

But behind all the clues and ghost stories and thefts and lies what *Greenglass House* really is is the story of a hero's journey. Milo starts out a soft-spoken kiddo with little faith in his own abilities. Donning the mantle of a kind of Dungeons & Dragons type character named Negret, he taps into a strength that he might otherwise not know he even had. There is a moment in the book when Milo starts acting with more confidence and actually thinks to himself, "And I didn't even have to use Negret's Irresistible Blandishment . . . I just did it." Milo's slow awakening to his own strengths and abilities is the heart of the novel. For all that people will discuss the mystery and the clues, it's Milo that holds everything together.

Much of his personality is embedded in his identity as an adopted kid too. I love the mention of "orphan magic" that Milford makes at one point. It's the idea that when something is sundered from its attachments it becomes more powerful in the process. At no point does Milford ever downplay the importance of the fact that Milo is adopted. It isn't a casual fact that's thrown in there and then forgotten. For Milo, the fact that he was adopted is part of who he is as a person. And coming to terms with that is part of his journey as well. Little wonder that he gathers such comfort from learning about orphan magic and its potential.

I'm looking at my notes about this book and I see I've written down little random facts that don't really fit in with this review. Things like, "I did wonder if Milo's name was a kind of unspoken homage to the Milo of The Phantom Tollbooth. And, "The book's attitude towards smuggling is not all that different from, say, Danny Champion of the World's attitude towards poaching." And, "I love the vocabulary at work here. Raconteur. Puissance." There is a lot a person can say about this book. I should note that there is a twist that a couple kids may see coming. It is, however, a fair twist and one that doesn't cheat before you get to it. For the most part, Milford does a divine job at writing a darned good mystery without sacrificing character development and deeper truths. A great grand book for those kiddos who like reading books that make them feel smart. Fun fun fun fun fun.

For ages 9-14.

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## Skip says

Milo lives in an inn, with his adoptive parents, the Pines. They are looking forward to a quiet Christmas, when a series of unexpected guests arrive, each with stories relating to the mysterious inn, a smuggler's place. Milo was a good lead character: honest, hardworking, but unsure of himself. Help arrives, including Meddy, who helps him dig into his imagination through a role playing game, through which he gains self confidence by to solving the mysteries of the guests' stolen belongings and ultimately, the mystery behind the house itself. There is some town folklore, a cast of quirky guests at the inn, and a good plot twist at the end. I also enjoyed the endnote by the author about adoption. My only complaint was I found it slow at times.