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Clarion Review

Young Adult Fiction

Ancient Elk Hunt
G.M. Moore
iUniverse Star
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★★★★★

There's something magical about boyhood. It's a time when kids are finally old enough to do many things independently, but still young enough to avoid the pitfalls of adulthood. It's an age of adventure, as seen in G.M. Moore's *Ancient Elk Hunt*, the second installment of the Up North Adventure series.

Corbett "Griffy" Griffith III is spending the summer at his Uncle Dell's Whispering Pines Lodge in Northern Wisconsin. That might make for a long summer for an eleven-year-old kid from Chicago, except that Griffy's friend, Pike, is there. Together, the two boys kick off the warm days with some kayaking, fishing, swimming and some mischievous adventures, including playing a joke on some annoying kids visiting the lodge. But when they find an ancient elk bone, Griffy and Pike discover that their greatest challenge may be facing off with a crooked archaeologist desperate for a discovery.

Ancient Elk Hunt is a crisp, entertaining read that's sure to capture a kid's imagination. Moore, a former newspaper writer who grew up exploring Northern Wisconsin, brings this beautiful world to life with taut and descriptive writing. When the author describes the forest as "a never-ending blur of white pine and yellow birch trees …" and the lake as "blue lake water sparkled and dance around them," you yearn to see this almost untouched wilderness.

For parents, this and the other books in the Up North Adventure series might be a refreshing alternative to some of the young adult series out there. Griffy and Pike are 'tween boys whose world is devoid of the darker issues that affect Harry Potter or the petty longings of the boys in the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series. Instead, Griffy and Pike's adventures are reminiscent of Robert McCloskey's Homer Price series or the Hardy Boys. While the boys do face modern problems (Griffy's divorced parents are sadly too busy for him, and it has an

adverse effect on him), Moore masterfully takes the reader back to an age when boys could really be boys, and in so doing, makes it seem fresh.

Perhaps the only trouble with the book is that it is too short. Surely Moore could have written at least another fifty pages of Griffy and Pike's summer adventures. Nonetheless, *Ancient Elk Hunt* is a book that will have kids eagerly awaiting the next installment in the series and parents flipping ahead to continue this story of boyhood friendship in the outdoors.

Katherine Prior