

Hemingway, Three Angels, and Me

Jerome Mark Antil

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The Jim Crow South is the setting for this compelling coming-of-age story filled with compassion and understanding.

1950s Little Rock is a whole new world to a kid from rural New York. In Jerome Mark Antil's *Hemingway, Three Angels, and Me*, themes of racial prejudice, crossing cultural divides, and the lasting effects of World War II are crafted into a compelling coming-of-age story filled with compassion and understanding.

In this fourth installment of the Pompey Hollow Book Club series, thirteen-year-old Jerry travels to Little Rock to visit his aunt and his uncle, a WWII bomber pilot and Jerry's personal hero. While there, in the midst of discovering the awful realities of Jim Crow, Jerry is visited by three guardian angels who enlist him to help a girl in trouble. The Book Club members have seen their fair share of adventure and catching criminals, but this is their biggest challenge to date.

It is no surprise that Mark Twain and Ernest Hemingway feature in this story, as Antil's writing shows influences of Twain's down-home charm and Hemingway's straightforward storytelling. The rural countryside is almost a character in its own right, providing the backdrop for a warm, caring community that pulls together in times of trouble and welcomes those in need with open arms. Though much of the story takes place in a bucolic setting, the plot does not mosey along; rather, it keeps a steady pace, pushing the action forward to a daring escape from Little Rock.

Parents should note that just as the kids of the Pompey Hollow Book Club have grown, so too has the nature of the issues they confront. The burglars and pickpockets of earlier books are replaced by the horrors of overt racism, including lynching and rape. While these issues are not described in detail, parents may want to consider if their children are ready for these topics.

Black-and-white pictures from Antil's family collection illustrate the story, and QR codes provide interactive audio and video effects, using modern technology to introduce younger audiences to the sights and sounds of the 1950s. The Pompey Hollow books are suited both to middle readers and to those nostalgic for a time ripe with family farms and small towns, rarer now than then.

Those who enjoy novels with small-town settings and wholesome young protagonists will enjoy this novel as well. It is not necessary to read the previous books in the series to enjoy this one, but once the last page is turned, the others are sure to be sought out.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (April 20, 2016)

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