ForeWord Reviews

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Leapholes
James Grippando
ABA Publishing
978-1-59031-666-5
(September 2006)

Ryan Coolidge is in trouble. Though only in middle school, he faces criminal charges in the deaths of four adults at a secret government lab, and the prosecution is playing hardball. His only hope rests with his court-appointed lawyer, a strange old man by the name of Hezekiah. Somewhere in some past case lies the precedent that Ryan will need to defend himself, and Hezekiah has a startling means of showing Ryan that even musty old cases involved real people with equally dire situations as his own.

Together, Hezekiah and Ryan do their research by physically entering law books through "leapholes"—rare and magical portals that transport them to the actual events of each case. However, they unexpectedly find themselves in serious danger, especially when Hezekiah, who is black, is captured and enslaved shortly before the Civil War. Ryan must find a way to rescue his new friend and mentor from the clutches of an evil and ruthless slaveowner. But unless they also find another leaphole, they will be trapped forever in the distant past….

The author creates an exciting story by revisiting important case decisions from American jurisprudence with the hindsight granted by modern society. In so doing, he imbues those cases with life in a way that simply reading the dry written decision of a judge cannot:

"Stop, you'll be caught!" cried Ryan.

Hezekiah only waved and smiled. In seconds the thoroughbred was speeding away at full speed. Out of leapholes and with no way to get home, Hezekiah was headed straight for the posse.

Ryan watched in despair as the old man disappeared into the darkness. Hezekiah's voice rang through the night as he called out to the slave catchers. It was working. The slave catchers were chasing Hezekiah.

"He's gone," said Ryan, not wanting to believe it. "Hezekiah is gone…."

The author is a former Miami lawyer with an impressive legal résumé. He is also the nationally best-selling author of eleven previous novels, and the 2005 recipient of the Distinguished Author Award from the University of Scranton. *Leapholes* is his first novel for

younger readers and is published with the enthusiastic blessing of the American Bar Association.

This book is a terrific way to introduce young readers to the legal concept of precedents and case law. The unique concept of “leapholes” will appeal to anyone, young or old, who may enjoy experiencing important legal decisions through the eyes, minds, and souls of the people who lived those historic events.

Alan J. Couture