Clarion Review

Young Adult Fiction

Rooke's Island: The Prophecy of the Staring Eyes
S.K. Whalen
iUniverse
978-0-595-44545-5
Four Stars (out of Five)

With top-notch writing and a suspenseful story S.K. Whalen's *Rooke's Island* is well suited for both children and adults. Protagonist Margery Mutters is independent intelligent and interesting—women with this holy trinity of characteristics make the best role models and heroines. Middle-aged Margery uncovers a world of tunnels and history beneath the world's crust a world where owls can talk to chosen humans and where the action doesn't seem to stop.

This novel begins simply enough: Margery receives a letter explaining that her uncle has passed away and that she needs to come to meet with a lawyer as soon as possible. Soon Margery discovers not only that there is a world of tunnels beneath the Earth's surface but that her role in a prophesy is as important to the owls as it to her.

The writing in this novel is as feisty and as fun as its characters as if Whalen is winking at readers as she zips through the action. Zesty descriptions and funny anecdotes make the story come alive. Margery is a role model fit for children and adults alike: she is independent kind and in tune with the world around her. Watching this woman confront each obstacle and overcome each challenge with skill and grace is a joy.

Unfortunately the novel lacks focus. Two paragraphs of description are often used when one would have sufficed and the author spends too much time on certain characters and images. She spends time describing characters that never make a second appearance including the postman in the novel's opening pages. Zeroing in on the important moments and descriptions would make this story that much tighter and more effective.

Rooke's Island is easy enough for young readers to enjoy but the plot has enough twists and turns and the humor is so well-timed that the piece will also speak to teens and adults. It won't long for readers to lose themselves in the tunnels of this book. By the end they will hope that another adventure with Margery Mutters is around the corner.

Lisa Bower