Clarion Review

Juvenile Fiction

The Keys to Adventure
Celisa Seybold
Lulu Publishing
978-0-557-55086-9
Three Stars (out of Five)

The keys on an old piano are one young girl's passport to a world of adventure in Celisa Seybold's *The Keys to Adventure*. Laurey McKay, an active, spirited ten-year-old, is acutely unhappy when her family moves from their home in Chicago to a house in St. Louis. The only thing that Laurey likes about the new place is an old piano that sits in the living room. Laurey is not, however, prepared for the adventures that the old piano has in store for her. Through it, Laurey will learn about the 1904 World's Fair and the history of her new house.

Seybold's book is charming and lively. The age of the main character, the simple plot, and the small number of characters make the book an ideal read for a child between seven and twelve. The simplicity of the story line will easily hold the attention of young readers, so *The Keys to Adventure* would also make a good read-aloud book for a young group. They will easily relate to the protagonist, Laurey, who "loved taking adventures and creating stories to tell at dinner." The plot is imaginative, and the transition into the adventure well orchestrated.

Seybold's book is not flawless, however. Occasionally, inconsistent verb tenses, sentence fragments, and awkward wording bespeak an immature writing style. For instance, she writes, "Laurey claiming that she did not want to go explore was painful to hear."

Scattered typos suggest a lack of careful copyediting, and upper case and italics are inappropriately used to disguise unclear descriptions and wording. For instance, rather than describing Laurey's emotions, Seybold employs capital letters to express Laurey's frustration with her parents. Seybold sometimes resorts to overly dramatic phrases that seems out of place: "The fair went on as if there was no answer to her question." And old-fashioned descriptions like "something wondrous to behold" seem a bit much for the intended audience.

While the writing style will keep this book from becoming a classic, the winsome plot and fast pace of *The Keys to Adventure* will certainly entertain young readers. This book

reminds children that adventure can often be found in some very unlikely places.

Emily Adams