

The Seekers: The Secret of the Turtles

Cece Younger

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A strong princess makes this story, already rife with environmental concerns, an appealing adventure for young audiences.

The Seekers: The Secret of the Turtles is a magical adventure story set in the southern Caribbean islands of Grenada and Barbados. Cece Younger creates a strong princess in Isabeau, and hers is a compelling story with near-constant action. Magical friends, helpful sea creatures, and a determined princess combine, and middle readers will cheer for Isabeau as she follows her destiny.

The story has elements of a traditional fairy tale, though it refreshingly departs from medieval European settings in favor of the Caribbean and its people. The king of Grenada frees a trapped young mermaid, whose queen, in turn, prophesies a special daughter for him. Baby Isabeau benefits from mermaid and narwhal protections as she grows, but when her friend is kidnapped, she must set out on a rescue mission. With the help of a troll and a magic book, her adventures continue, and she works to save her world from destruction at the hands of the evil Shadow, a creature bent on achieving power any way he can get it, even if it means destroying the Caribbean itself.

Isabeau and her friends Hopper and Julian are friendly and engaging characters that fully inhabit the nautical setting of the Caribbean. This cast should prove interesting and relatable to young audiences, especially Isabeau, who is a courageous princess of color who uses ingenuity and kindness to solve problems, demonstrating that she is, as her name suggests, "one who cares." Younger reveals that she wrote this story especially for her daughter, who wondered where she could find princess heroes who looked like her.

Isabeau and her friends embody the richness of spirit that can be found in the Caribbean's long maritime history. Also important to the book is a concern for the environmental issues facing the Caribbean. Isabeau and her friends are fighting against the environmental damage that the evil Shadow causes in his quest for domination.

The story is fast paced, but some transitions are incomplete, missing, or confusing. In the first chapter, Isabeau is born. Two lines later, the king gives her a private alcove, and five lines after that, she meets the mermaid queen. These and other quick transitions found throughout the book detract from the strong story line. The ending feels abrupt as well. Interspersed throughout are interesting facts about the region. The nutmeg boat that Isabeau and her friends use in their adventures underscores that nutmeg is one of Grenada's main exports. The geographic descriptions are rich and help propel the adventure.

The Seekers is a rousing story certain to appeal to fans of *The Magic Tree House* and other middle reader adventure tales. The author creates a winning trio in Isabeau, Hopper, and Julian, who will leave readers clamoring for more adventures. The importance of friendship, working together, and saving the environment are all themes worth repeating, and the story is sure to satisfy those who like their princesses to save themselves.

KELLY DEPIN (June 13, 2016)

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