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Minnow

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Abstract

LaTasha Martin, MLIS student at the University of South Carolina reviews *Minnow* by James E. McTeer.

Keywords

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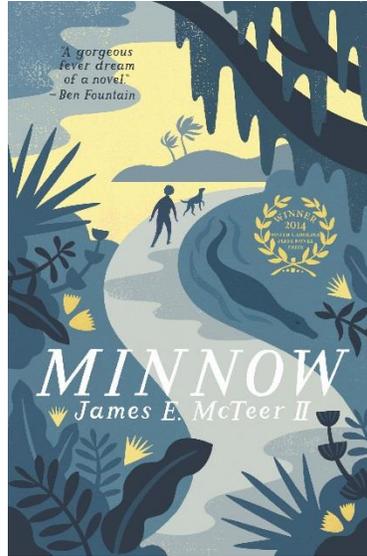
Minnow

James E. McTeer

Hub City Press, 2015, 24-95

By definition of his name, the main character Minnow is a “small fish” embarking on a big journey that challenges his worldview as a child. When his father falls deathly ill, his mother entrusts a significant amount of money in his care, charging him to simply go to the town’s pharmacist and return home with a medicine. When he’s dismissed (and subsequently bamboozled) by the pharmacist, Minnow is determined to find this medicine, and embarks on an otherworldly journey to lowcountry lands around his town, a world he would have never dared venture before. He shucks his fear and follows the dangerous, circuitous charge of a witchdoctor deeper into the mystical lands littered with haints, ancient monsters, and the dead. On his heroic journey, Minnow loses parts of himself, but gains a story of strength his circle of campfire friends will revere.

We’re first introduced to Minnow’s world as he knows it, painted in vivid color, so real readers sink under the oppressive heat with Minnow. The story’s environment is rich and full of history— at times speaks louder than Minnow’s voice. He and nature are one, sometimes in communion and often in battle. With each step into the woods or swamp or river, Minnow learns a hard lesson in life. With each person he meets, who turns out to be more helpful and open-hearted than he expects, he unravels a mystery he’d most likely never uncover in his once sheltered life.



As *Minnow* evolves, we see nature unravel in beautiful language that eloquently captures the salt marsh, blue-streaked sky, and mysterious calls of the wild. It’s a work where readers don’t see firsthand through transparent words how the main character feels; instead, Minnow’s unspoken communication with nature and its fruits insinuate his struggle. Through the young boy’s determined navigation through darkness, McTeer delivers a spellbinding coming-of-age story that will settle deep into the hearts of readers.

Perhaps *Minnow* is written for the young adult audience. However, the language and context commands a mature reader. McTeer is a school librarian in a South Carolina elementary school, and has his ears attuned to the reading interests of children and budding adults. He is also a native of Beaufort, South Carolina; and, his writing in *Minnow* speaks to an understanding and depth only a native of such a lush land — of nature and culture — can speak.

LaTasha Martin is a MLIS student at the University of South Carolina, and a short story writer.