

A NEW AMANDA GREENLEAF

Amanda Greenleaf and the boy magician. Ed Kavanagh. Illus. Janice Udell. Moonstone Press, 1991. 72 pp., \$8.95 paper. ISBN 0-920259-33-2

Amanda Greenleaf, the mythical guardian of a waterfall on a distant star, returns to Blue Star to aid her human friends Francis and Trina. This time she travels with her elf friend Nollekens, the Court Magician, with hopes that his magic will be powerful enough to rescue her friends' mother and to save the star from the onslaught of civil war.

Although this is the third book in a series including *Amanda Greenleaf visits a distant star* and *Amanda Greenleaf and the spell of the water witch*, it stands alone as an enjoyable fantasy. Its short chapters and large print make the novel suitable reading for students in grades two through five. There are some beautifully drawn black-and-white illustrations by Janice Udell which aid in the comprehension of key events. An example is the battle between the king's armies where we see the soldiers' arrows turned into musical notes in mid-air by Nollekens' magic.

The chapters of three to five pages allow Kavanagh to move quickly from scene to scene and enhance the swiftly-moving plot. The novel is filled with action and adventure which not only delights but makes the reader feel as if he or she is participating too: "The children ran through the deserted streets, struggling to keep the sleigh in sight. Amanda Greenleaf felt as if her lungs would burst from breathing in so much cold air" (38). Kavanagh's descriptions transport his readers into the various scenes: "In a deep forest full of ancient magic, a beautiful waterfall leaped over the rocks and splashed into a wide pool. Beyond the pool it swirled and bubbled, forming a rushing river....The air was soft and wet with misty spray" (8-10).

Kavanagh also creates believable characters. Amanda and her friend Nollekens are not so strange or mythical that the human characters are afraid to accept their help and exchange their knowledge. There is evidence of their acceptance when Tibble, another human boy, offers to help Nollekens hide himself and his human friends by showing an interest in Nollekens' magic. Nollekens teaches Tibble some simple spells in the hope that through Tibble his power might be controlled. By allowing the humans to interact with Amanda and Nollekens, Kavanagh is also opening channels which allow the reader to learn peace and understanding from them.

The combination of action and intriguing characters in a novel with a distinctly moral cast is reminiscent of L'Engle, or even perhaps LeGuin, though for a younger set; and that is high praise.

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