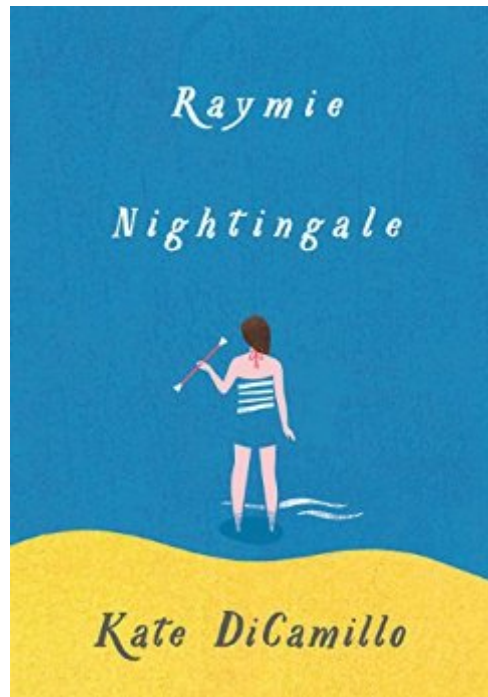


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Raymie Nightingale



Synopsis

Raymie Clarke has come to realize that everything, absolutely everything, depends on her. And she has a plan. If Raymie can win the Little Miss Central Florida Tire competition, then her father, who left town two days ago with a dental hygienist, will see Raymie's picture in the paper and (maybe) come home. To win, not only does Raymie have to do good deeds and learn how to twirl a baton; she also has to contend with the wispy, frequently fainting Louisiana Elefante, who has a show-business background, and the fiery, stubborn Beverly Tapinski, who's determined to sabotage the contest. But as the competition approaches, loneliness, loss, and unanswerable questions draw the three girls into an unlikely friendship and challenge each of them to come to the rescue in unexpected ways.

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Customer Reviews

Kate is a master storyteller, that fact cannot be extricated from this latest novel. There are glorious moments of superb writing in this book, but there are just so few of them compared to her other works that it was a disappointment. The story is cute, and unlike other reviewers here, the

quirkiness of the characters and setting and plot did not bother me as much as how clear it was that she did not have much of a story to tell. It felt forced, like she was searching for a storyline to convey some personal feelings, memories, experiences of loss, but that the story just would not develop or materialize, in depth or breadth. This happens, even to the best writers. The first, several, truncated chapters really needed to be reworked, as well. It was hard to not be bored, and I say that with such disappointment and surprise because this is Kate DiCamillo we're talking about!! No one compares to her in children's literature, and that remains true even with this review. This work would have been better condensed into a short story for kids, rather than strung out into a novel/novella. She didn't have enough material or story to make it work, it seems. Kate is a master at depicting emotion and universal truths and pains and joys in a unique way that kids can relate, and more important even...in a way that actually beguiles them. Yes, she uses a lot of quirk, but usually it works because the depth behind it is magical and redeeming. A little bit of that magic, that she is a master at creating, was present in a few spare places in this book, and I was THRILLED to come upon them, but sad to have read this story, overall. I wait for Kate's books, I always will.

My relationship to Kate DiCamillo's books is one built entirely on meaning. Which is to say, the less emotional and meaningful they are, the better I like them. Spaghetti loving horses and girls that live in tree houses? Right up my alley! China rabbits and mice with excessive earlobes? Not my cup of tea. It's good as a reviewer to know your own shortcomings and I just sort of figured that I'd avoid DiCamillo books when they looked deep and insightful. And when the cover for *Raymie Nightingale* was released it was easily summarized in one word: Meaningful. A girl, seen from behind, stands ankle-deep in water holding a single baton. Still, I've had a good run of luck with DiCamillo as of late and I was willing to push it. I polled my friends who had read the book. The poor souls had to answer the impossible question, "Will I like it?" but they shouldered the burden bravely. Yes, they said. I would like it. I read it. And you know what? I do like it! It is, without a doubt, one of the saddest books I've ever read, but I like it a lot. I like the wordplay, the characters, and the setting. I like what the book has to say about friendship and being honest with yourself and others. I like the ending very very much indeed (it has a killer climax that I feel like I should have seen coming, but didn't). I do think it's a different kind of DiCamillo book than folks are used to. It's her style, no bones about it, but coming from a deeper place than her books have in the past. In any case, it's a keeper. Meaning plus pep. Maybe it isn't much of a plan, but don't tell Raymie that. So far she thinks she has it all figured out. Since her father skipped town with that dental hygienist, things haven't been right in Raymie's world.

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