



Meadowlark

Wendi Stewart

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When her family's car goes through the ice on Rainy Lake one cold March day in 1962, six-year-old Rebecca Archer is the only person her father is able to pull from the sinking vehicle. But as Rebecca grows up in a farmhouse haunted by the absence of her mother and baby brother, raised by a man left nearly paralyzed with grief, she wonders if her father really did save her after all.

Eventually though, Rebecca finds solace in the company of her friends: Chuck, the sensitive son of a violently abusive father; and Lissie, an Aboriginal girl being raised alone by a perfectionist white mother. As these three young people protect and support one another, Rebecca discovers that by saving Chuck and Lissie, she may also save herself.

Meadowlark Details

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Author : Wendi Stewart

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From Reader Review Meadowlark for online ebook

Poonam Mittra Kamal says

This book left me wanting... wanting more from the characters, wanting to finish their stories. But I always feel that is the sign of a good book one that engages you with the characters - where you feel you are part of their lives and want to stay with them as they continue on their journey. While the characters were much younger they grew, or rather matured, during the course of the book. Meadowlark starts with a tragedy and we see how a little girl and her father are impacted and how she survives thanks to good friends and good memories.

Kara Lyons says

I received this book through a Goodreads Giveaway

I enjoyed the book- it was interesting how the 3 characters merged together and helped each other overcome their traumatic upbringings. It was well written and the ending left you to ponder.

I would read any more novels this author would write in the future as I think this was a great first novel.

Joanne Garbato says

Meadowlark is a beautifully written, sometimes heartbreaking, coming of age novel. It is very impressive for a debut and had me hooked from the prologue. Rebecca Archer's childhood ends at age 6, the day her family's car goes through the ice on Rainy Lake in northern Ontario and she loses her mother and baby brother. Her father withdraws from the world and from his daughter, unable to escape his grief. Rebecca grows up neglected, but latches onto two other outcast children, Chuck and Lissie, who are encouraged by her strength. The three friends rely on each other for love, support and acceptance. Meadowlark has a very satisfying ending with the children graduated from high school, moving on from their dysfunctional families and looking towards the future. Highly recommended

Callie Wonderwood says

Als das Auto der Familie Archer in Kanada durchs Eis eines gefrorenen Sees bricht, kann Robert einzig seine Tochter retten. Während sie heranwächst, kümmert sich Rebecca allein um den Haushalt und die Farm, der Vater kapselt sich ab. Doch so überwältigend wie die Trauer ist auch ihre Wut auf den Vater, dem nicht zu helfen ist und der nach und nach alle Erinnerungsstücke an die Mutter verschwinden lässt. Trost findet Rebecca in der Freundschaft mit Chuck, einem empfindsamen, von seinem Vater tyrannisierten Jungen, und mit Lissie, die von einer perfektionistischen Adoptivmutter gegängelt wird. – Ein eindringliches Debüt, das Trauer und Komik, Melancholie und unbändigen Lebenswillen perfekt verbindet.

(Klappentext)

Gleich zu Beginn fand ich toll, wie gut und authentisch die Autorin aus der Sicht von Kindern geschrieben

hat und man nachvollziehen konnte, wie Rebecca, Chuck und Lissie verschiedene Situationen und Geschehnisse wahrnehmen und erleben.

Die ersten paar Kapitel erzählen von Rebeccas Leben und dem schrecklichen Unfall der Familie, der ihr komplettes Leben verändert. Später wird auch aus der Sicht der anderen beiden Hauptcharaktere erzählt. Zitat : "Manchmal schwingt sie sich mitten auf der Koppel auf ihr Pony, liegt auf Daisys Rücken und schaut in die Wolken. Dann sieht sie Hunde und Drachen und Burgen in den sich auftürmenden und dahintreibenden Wolken und vergisst für kurze Zeit, wo sie ist und wer sie ist. Sie denkt nicht mehr an Verlust und Einsamkeit und daran, wie sich das Leben urplötzlich verändern kann."

Oft gibt es in dem Buch mehrere Zeitsprünge und Rebecca beim Schulanfang Chuck kennen, der auch kein einfaches Leben hat. Obwohl, und wahrscheinlich gerade deswegen, weil die beiden so verschieden ist, freunden sie sich an. Rebecca ist charakterlich sehr selbstbewusst, und für ihr Alter ungewöhnlich realistisch und muss durch ihre aktuelle Situation schnell lernen, eigenständig zu sein und viele Aufgaben im Haushalt übernehmen. Chuck dagegen ist träumerisch, kindlicher und hilfloser als Rebecca und leidet viel unter seinem Vater. Er ist ängstlich und wirkt schwächlich und man merkt schnell, wie sie sehr er Rebecca braucht.

Diese ganz besondere Freundschaft zwischen den beiden, die zusammen Dinge unternehmen um ihrem harten und tristen Alltag zu entfliehen, ist einfach nur schön. Rebecca nimmt zwar mehr die Unterstützende Rolle ein, aber durch Chuck ist sie auch weniger einsam.

Erst deutlich später taucht Lissie auf, die durch ihre Adoption auf einer Identitätssuche ist, den von ihrer Adoptivmutter streng kontrollierten Tagesablauf befolgen muss und keine Freunde hat und nicht irgendwo richtig dazugehört. Gut gefallen hat mir auch wieder, dass Rebecca, mit ihrer starken nach außen Persönlichkeit und ihrer für die anderen unsichtbaren inneren Verletztheit, Lissie eine total große Hilfe ist und die drei Freunde insgesamt durch ihre Freundschaft stärker sind, weil Liebe von ihren Familien nicht existiert.

Von großer Bedeutung ist für das Buch die Fantasie und Vorstellungskraft in der Welt von Rebecca, Chuck und Lissie, wo es eigentlich keine Hoffnung auf ein besseres Leben gibt. Ihre Träume sind trotz ihrer verlorenen Kindheiten nicht vergessen und sie wünschen sich ein anderes Leben, indem sie glücklich sind. Zitat : "Sie hatte noch nie eine Freundin, ist noch nie in ein Baumhaus gestiegen, um leise von Träumen und Alpträumen zu erzählen, hat noch nie jemanden aus ihrer Klasse zum Übernachten eingeladen, noch nie im Wohnzimmer ein Zelt aus Decken und Sofakissen gebaut.[...] Vielleicht ist es zu spät für Elisabeth, sich ihnen anzuschließen, aber es könnte ihre letzte Chance sein, Freundschaft zu erfahren, zu erleben, neben jemanden zu stehen, der dort nicht stehen muss, es aber trotzdem tut."

Interessant ist war auch, dass die Geschichte ungefähr ab den 60er Jahren in einer trostlosen, leicht abgeschiedenen Kleinstadt in Kanada spielt.

Was mich leider nicht komplett überzeugen konnte, war der Schreibstil der Autorin. Zwar mochte ich total, wie sie aus der Sicht der Hauptpersonen geschrieben hat, aber oft war die Geschichte doch langatmig, es gab manchmal abrupte Zeitsprünge und das Buch konnte mich nicht richtig packen. Ich habe leider (auch bei so einem Genre) das Gefühl vermisst, unbedingt weiter lesen zu wollen.

Fazit :

Ein gutes und berührendes Buch über verlorene Kindheiten und die ganz besondere Freundschaft von Rebecca, Chuck und Lissie in einer trostlosen Welt.

Doeraymee says

Lovely coming-of-age book about friendship and the power it has to bring us through life's hardest spots.

Ellen Thomson says

Wow, what an AWESOME book! I just finished it this morning, having picked it up a few days ago at Indigo. I read it sitting in the truck while I waited for my youngest's bus to arrive. I read it in the truck while his team was changing for hockey, instead of kibbitzing with the other parents at the arena. I read it in my eldest's room (he's away at university) until late at night, when I should have been asleep. I read it by the light of dawn, first thing in the morning, quietly in bed, when I should have been out to feed the dogs and horses before everyone else gets up. I had a hard time putting it down.

Meadowlark made me cry several times over. It made me remember and think about Rebecca and Chuck and Robert and Charlotte and all the others while I was doing my chores during the day. It made me reflect. It made me compare. It made me analyze.

The characters are unforgettable. They are so poignantly described, they feel real. Their experiences are vivid. They are clearly written by an author who has mature understanding not only of the events occurring in the characters' lives, but also the kind of absorption and processing that only time can provide. The result is a powerful transitioning on the part of Rebecca from raw pain to pure strength, and her beautiful instinct to nurture and protect her two close friends.

It struck me early on in the novel that most of the male characters were nasty. As the mother of four boys, I'm hyper aware of how men are portrayed, how they are so often bowled over by the media, by words, by images, by "jokes" on the internet. The men in my life are strong silent types, taught to be polite, to be tolerant, to turn the other cheek. They dislike confrontation, and so when they are faced with bullying words in the guise of jokes from women, they would rather turn away than spend time and energy "getting into it". And so, the insults remain unchallenged. Women are often so much better with words, and they pay more attention to any offense, either real or perceived. They are better at identifying nuances and better at challenging them. So it was with disappointment that I read about the arrogant doctor, the abusive father, the crazy music teacher, etc. They far outnumbered the few good men, primarily Robert's friend, Mr. Law, and the homeroom teacher. It makes me very sad to think that this might possibly be close to reality for some women. This, however, was Rebecca's reality at that time, in that place. I read it as a sad eye-opener for those of us who never experienced such painful rejection or lack of kindness from so many men in their lives.

Naturally, I would like to know what happens to Rebecca, Chuck, and Elisabeth. My mind has already begun to wander down that path, to guess what might become of each of their journeys. Will there be a sequel?

If so, can't wait!!

Lisa Guenther says

A really lovely coming-of-age book set in rural Ontario. Rebecca, Chuck and Lissie all have troubled homes, in some way or another. Stewart digs into troubled parent-child relationships, and the ways people try to find

what they're lacking in their home lives, finding a place to belong.

I found I was really rooting for the characters, hoping they'd all find a way to break out of their restricted lives. Overall a very good read.

Aimee Boyer says

Outstanding tale of characters you love and want the best for. Characters who you grieve for when the last page is turned.

Jen McLeod says

I was sent a free advance reader copy of Meadowlark by the publisher through a Goodreads Giveaway.

Meadowlark is a coming-of-age story set in small-town Manitoba in the 60s and 70s, and the author's inaugural work. After my first day of reading this novel, I wasn't sure I could go on with it. I was sitting in my back yard with my 1-year-old son and 6-year-old daughter, reading through tears and considered shelving it. It's not often that I stop reading a book, but this one was hitting pretty close to home for me and I wasn't sure I wanted to put myself through reading it. I gave it a rest for a day and went back to it.

After the initial tragedy, the book's sadness is blunted at least to some degree, and I was, happily, able to keep reading. This is a good book, with good solid characters. I truly hope Ms Stewart continues to write about these characters because they quickly burrow under the reader's skin.

I did have a few issues with the book, however. I have a terrible time dealing with novels written in present tense. To me, present tense takes away the story-telling aspect of fiction, and it reminds me of described video for the visually impaired. I also found the writing just a bit unrefined, and felt like many spots could benefit from another re-write. There were many clumsy sentences and paragraphs, and words that repeat too closely together. For example, on page 37 both the second and third sentences begin with the words "My chest". On page 45, the first sentence describes "a black car". The second sentence again uses the word "car" to describe it. I think it would have flowed better if it instead read "there is no dust on the paint, no fingerprints...". I know it's a bit nit-picky, but each time I stumbled over one of these, they stuck with me. Also, Jake is described as being 11 months old, but later in the story, the author mentions his birthday party.

All in all, Meadowlark was a sad and beautiful book and I think the author has a great deal of potential for greatness, but a lack of polish and attention to detail means it fell a bit short for me.

Hazel Lyder says

Meadowlark (NeWest Press) is a work of literary fiction by debut novelist Wendi Stewart.

In broad brush-strokes, it is the story of three children - Rebecca, Chuck and Lissie - growing up in 1960s western Ontario, in families that are the anti-thesis of those depicted in pop-culture sitcoms like Leave it to Beaver or the Brady Bunch. Let's just say, you'll meet no June Cleavers here. You will meet the

protagonists' families, such as they are, families left too much on their own with both big and small tragedies. Rebecca's and Lissie's lives have been profoundly knocked off course by catastrophic accidents and in Chuck's case it is the generational, long-play of unfulfilled dreams.

The notion of "it takes a village" comes slowly to life in a way that gives that somewhat saccharin phrase its true shape. As the parents of the three children are unable to fulfill their part of the bargain – to love and nurture – it is a host of bi-standers who, often unwittingly, end up filling the void.

If you are a fan of Mary Lawson's work, Alexander McLeod's *No Great Mischief*, or Dianne Warren's *Cool Water*, you will love *Meadowlark*.

Stewart may be new to the literary scene but she is a bona fide story-teller, who also has a solid grasp of craft. Here she delivers a story full of yearning, an inextinguishable longing to recover the past and your heart will ache in that delicious way a good book can make happen but reader beware: have the tissues handy!

Diane says

Well done! The characters are engaging, the ending is satisfying and the writing is beautiful.

M.San says

I liked this book although some descriptions became a bit tedious and I skipped pages. I enjoyed it right to the end. Yay!

Jane Mulkewich says

A wonderful story about a very strong young woman; about three kids who had to raise themselves - living with parents who were emotionally absent and/or abusive; about grief; about love and family and friends and belonging.

P.D. Stewart says

A sad, yet wonderful tale. Thoroughly enjoyed every moment of it. If the characters don't pull you into their lives, you need to read it again.

Christine Jordan says

A wonderful story of growing up as an outsider not knowing where or to whom you belong. The characters

were well developed and drew you into their sorrow. A very heart warming story that will move you to tears.
