



Good Reads: Owl Academy, New Jersey, USA

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Article Category:

Good Reads

Byline:

Reviews from pupils of the **Owl Academy, New Jersey, USA**.

Chosen by 12- and 13-year-old members of the homeschool writing class at Owl Academy, Highland Park, New Jersey, USA.

Thanks to class teacher Eunice Au and teacher assistant Annabelle Chan.

The Importance of Being Earnest

Oscar Wilde, Penguin Classics, 978 0 14 043.606 8, £8.99 pbk

In Oscar Wilde's play **The Importance of Being Earnest** two men woo two ladies under the same name: Ernest. At first it is only Jack Worthing, calling himself Ernest to win the hand of Gwendolen Fairfax. But then Algernon Moncrieff woos Cecily Cardew under the same name, pretending to be Jack's brother. No sooner than Algernon and Cecily are engaged, and Gwendolen arrives on the scene, and mentions that she is engaged to Ernest Worthing. Cecily indignantly asserts that *she* is engaged to Ernest Worthing. When Algernon and Jack enter, the ladies discover that they are not engaged to the same person. But can Cecily and Gwendolen ? both resolute to only marry a man named Ernest ? consent to wed these men knowing their true identities?

In the end, Wilde's play makes the two-fold point that the title suggests. Honesty goes a long way in avoiding confusion, and changing your name can win a girl's heart.

Rebecca Au

Black Beauty

Anna Sewell, Puffin Classics, 978 0 14 132103 5, £6.99 pbk

First published in 1877, the book **Black Beauty**, written by Anna Sewell, significantly influenced how people thought and acted toward horses. The story is told from the horse, Black Beauty's perspective and revolves around his life as he encounters various owners, homes, and vocations. He starts out at Farmer Grey's but then moves to Birtwick Park, where he eagerly meets fellow horses Merrylegs and Ginger. With another owner, he is forced to wear bearing reins, which uncomfortably hold his neck up. Later, a drunken carriage driver nearly ruins Beauty by his obliviousness to Beauty's loose shoe. But Beauty's life ends hopefully. Joe Green, his friend and former stable boy, eventually becomes his groom and ensures that Black Beauty will not be sold again. Ultimately, by informing us about horse treatment and endearing us to Black Beauty, this book changes our attitude toward horses.

Colleen Au

The Phantom Tollbooth

Norton Juster, HarperCollins 'Essential Modern Classics', 978 0 00 726348 6, £5.99 pbk

?There was once a boy named Milo who didn't know what to do with himself ? not just sometimes, but always.? This opening line to **The Phantom Tollbooth** doesn't sound promising, but don't let that fool you.

Milo is bored with everything in life. One day he returns home to find a package in his room which he opens and discovers a tollbooth. He jumps into his toy electric car and drives through. He finds himself in a strange land, where he meets Tock and the Humbug. While in the strange land, Milo learns the two wise princesses, Rhyme and Reason, have been banished and now there is no wisdom in the land. Milo, Tock and the Humbug travel to the Mountains of Ignorance, where demons reside, to save the princesses. Can they do it? In the end, Milo learns that life is never boring when he explores, observes, and learns about the world around him.

Stephen Chan

The End of the Beginning

Avi, ill. Tricia Tusa, Harcourt, 978 0 15 205532 5, £4.51 from Amazon

The End of the Beginning is a humorous, nonsensical book by award-winning author Avi.

Living in a tree, Avon the snail is dejected. Since Avon has read many books, he knows that in each story everyone becomes happy when an adventure ends. Therefore, the snail is inspired to embark on his own journey. He soon meets Edward, an ant, who joins him on his adventure around the tree.

The snail and ant help, or are helped by, various creatures along the way. They have numerous funny situations with themselves and others. Eventually, the friends find a ?magical castle?, almost identical to Avon's house, and settle in. Avon becomes extremely famous for his adventures.

Undeniably, this is a superb book as it will make anyone think and also laugh as Avon and Edward explain their logic to each other. **The End of the Beginning** is certainly an extraordinary book for young and old alike.

Allissa Chan

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