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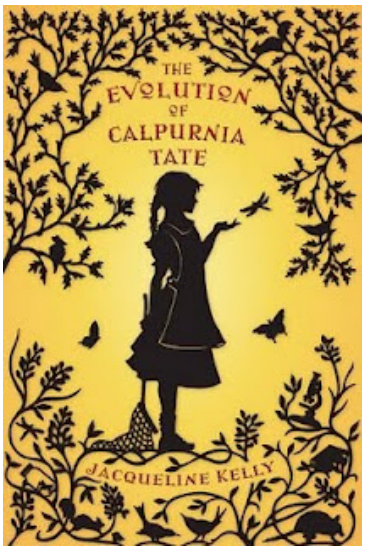
The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate



I admit to being a streaky reader - I think this time last year I was on a World War I fiction kick. And this winter I read three books in a row about the Johnstown Flood including both fiction and non-fiction titles - ***Three Rivers Rising*** [1], ***In Sunlight In a Beautiful Garden*** [2], and ***The Johnstown Flood*** [3]. The latter is by David McCullough, a famous historian and two time Pulitzer Prize recipient who is from Pittsburgh near the area where the flood occurred.

Recently though it seems I am reading a lot of coming of age novels featuring girls as the main character. E. Lockhart has written some wonderful contemporary coming of age novels, but for something historical I also have recently fallen for ***The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*** [4] by Jacqueline Kelly.

Calpurnia - Callie Vee to her family - is the only girl in a large family living in rural Texas at the turn of the 20th century. Much to her mother's displeasure, Callie begins spending most of her time outdoors observing plants and animals. The traditional female pursuits of handicrafts, cooking and dress hold no interest for Callie. Instead she becomes intersted in Darwin's recently published The Evolution of Species - though a mean librarian won't lend it to her (curse mean librarian stereotypes!). Callie's quirky grandfather intervenes and eventually helps guide Callie with her curiosity and excitement for the natural world through the process of scientific observation. Callie dreams of becoming a naturalist and a scientist but even at the age of 12 feels pressure to concede to housewifery. Her future is unfortunately uncertain, but the humor and longing to follow your dreams are handled deftly with a tender hand. Kelly's first novel would make a wonderful multi-generational read. Options for young women certainly have changed since 1899, but the struggles of growing up and into your own skin may continue to exist.
For the Love of Reading[5]Information, Answers & Reviews [6]Coming of Age [7]Historical [8]
The evolution of Calpurnia Tate [9]

Posted by Sarah B. on Feb 22, 2011

- [10]
- [11]
- [12]

Links:
[1] http://mcpl.monroe.lib.in.us/view.aspx?cn=538610
[2] http://mcpl.monroe.lib.in.us/view.aspx?cn=90565
[3] http://mcpl.monroe.lib.in.us/view.aspx?cn=578600,%20289753
[4] http://mcpl.monroe.lib.in.us/view.aspx?cn=527556,%20479319,%20522675
[5] http://mcpl.info/bookblog
[6] http://mcpl.info/category/blogs/information-answers-reviews
[7] http://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subjects/coming-age
[8] http://mcpl.info/category/reviews-subjects/historical
[9] http://mcpl.info/category/reviews-titles/evolution-calpurnia-tate
[10] http://mcpl.info/print/printpdf/blogs/love-reading/evolution-calpurnia-tate?page=3
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