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Picture The Dead



Synopsis

"A perfectly haunting combination." —Jon Scieszka, bestselling author and Caldecott Honor winner "I loved *Picture the Dead*. Eerie, romantic, moody, and immersive. A beautifully illustrated gothic delight!" —Holly Black, New York Times bestselling author of *Black Cat* "A tour de force, a remarkable feat of visual and verbal storytelling, as playful as it is serious, as haunting as it is delightful." —Michael Chabon, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay* Jennie feels the tingling presence of something unnatural in the house now that Will is dead. Her heart aches without him, and she still doesn't know how he really died. It seems that everywhere she turns, someone is hiding yet another clue. As Jennie seeks the truth, she finds herself drawn ever deeper into a series of tricks and lies, secrets and betrayals, and begins to wonder if she had every really known Will at all.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 800 (What's this?)

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Sourcebooks Fire (February 1, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 9781402268342

ISBN-13: 978-1402268342

ASIN: 1402268343

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.7 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 32 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,393,352 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #97 in *Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > Civil War Period* #143 in *Books > Teens > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Horror > Ghosts* #545 in *Books > Teens > Mysteries & Thrillers > Historical*

Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 6 - 12

Customer Reviews

Gr 6-10 —This highly unusual book is a combination of historical fiction, a ghost story, and a scrapbook. Jennie Lovell's twin brother, Toby, and her fiancé, Will, have been killed in the Civil War, the latter under mysterious circumstances. Will's brother returns home a battered, bitter young man with secrets that Jennie is determined to uncover. She is under the guardianship of her aunt

and uncle, Will and Quinn's parents, and they threaten to turn her out. She is mesmerized by a photographer who claims to be able to capture images from the spirit world, and she uses this relationship to explore the signs she believes Will is sending her, warnings that she must decipher carefully. In the end, it isn't clear if the ghost of Jennie's fiancé is real or a figment of her imagination, which makes the story all the more eerie. What is suspect, and frightening, is Quinn's sudden interest in Jennie. The inclusion of family portraits, invitations, newspaper clippings, and letters from her scrapbook make the reading experience rich with texture. Serious readers of historical fiction will be pleased to discover a book with a unique perspective on such a well-represented period of American history as well as a good story with suspense and a determined heroine. Nora G. Murphy, Los Angeles Academy Middle School
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On the home front near Boston in 1864, Jennie feels her twin's presence like "a wave crashing over me" moments after he dies in a Union field hospital. Over the next year, she senses his presence and, more strongly, that of her fiancé, their cousin Will, who also died in the war. Will's brother Quinn arrives home wounded, gaunt, and haunted by his experiences. When his painful revelations change the way she thinks about Will, Jennie faces hard choices and tries to contact the dead for guidance in discovering the truth. Brown's evocative black-and-white drawings of photographs, letters, and other documents such as newspaper clippings appear between chapters in four-page, black-paper sections representing Jennie's scrapbooks and, equally, possible evidence in the mystery. Although Griffin's vivid writing will draw readers into Jennie's first-person narrative of love, doubt, and mystery, the tale goes beyond her particular ghosts and also shows how broadly the country was haunted: survivors by the loss of loved ones and soldiers by wretched memories. A Civil War ghost story with gothic overtones. Grades 6-9. --Carolyn Phelan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I'll be very honest and say that I had some preconceived notions about how awesome this book was going to be because it had three of my favorite things: ghosts, the civil war and PICTURES! Yes, I'll admit that I'm basically 12 at heart and love illustrations to go along with a story. I'm a very visual person so the right illustrations can really enhance my reading enjoyment. Many people scoff at such things but I welcome pictures in novels! Ghosts and the Civil War kind of go hand in hand for

me so if a book has both, it is a must read. Throw in an author like Adele Griffin and a super spooky plot and I expect nothing less than awesome. *Picture the Dead* mostly lived up to this expectation.

Mostly LIKES: *Scrapbooks*: Not only was this book beautifully illustrated, the illustrations were done as a scrapbook. They included letters and drawings as well as photos. Each scrapbook page pulled you farther into the story and helped to move it along at an exciting pace. The only problem with this is that I did catch myself cheating and jumping ahead to see what pictures were next. **Bad!**

Twists and turns: I thought at one point that I knew exactly what the "twist" was going to be and I was feeling pretty smug about the whole then. Then the story did a one-eighty and I was completely at a loss. I just didn't see the end coming and it hit me hard. I love it when a story surprised me.

Jennie: Jennie was a genuinely likeable character with a lot of spunk, especially for a nineteenth century girl. I really felt for her and cared about her plight. She pulled me into the story and made it very real.

DISLIKES: *Kissing cousins*, no seriously: First off let me say that I understand that it was common practice until fairly recently (in the grand scheme of things) for people to marry cousins. That being said, it still creeps me right out. For whatever reason I just can't put it in the context of "that was then, this is now". This is probably because I grew up being very close to my cousins. They were like my siblings so the idea of being romantically involved with one of them makes me want to heave. Jennie isn't just involved with one, but two cousins, with whom she has lived for the past several years after the deaths of her parents. This is probably the thing that bothered me most about the book.

It could have been scarier: I was looking forward to a scary read and, while spooky, I wouldn't call this book scary. It really read more like an historical fiction with some ghostly elements. I would have liked to have seen a bit more creepiness.

Jennie's Uncle: This character really didn't add much to the story except to underline Jennie's desperate situation. I wish he would have been developed a bit more.

When all is said and done, *Picture the Dead* is exactly what it claims to be: a spooky, romantic story with some really great twists and turns. The illustrations and the scrapbook idea only adds to the story and the overall ambiance of the tale. This is a quick, fun read that is sure to keep the reader guessing.

Recommended for ages 12 and up. Adele Griffin and Lisa Brown have written a unique illustrated young adult novel that is difficult to categorize. It's carefully researched historical fiction but also a ghost story and a mystery with graphic novel elements as well. With illustrations that mimic the look of a Civil War scrapbook kept by our heroine, our story is told in the first person by orphan Jennie Lovell, who together with her twin brother has been raised for the last four years by her aunt and uncle alongside their two sons, Will and Quinn. Before the novel opens, Jennie and Will have fallen

in love and become engaged. Jennie's girlish dreams of happiness vanish as all three young men in the household go off to fight for the Union cause. First her brother dies of disease (which killed many more soldiers than did the battles themselves), then her cousin Quinn staggers home with a terrible wound to his face and the news that her fiancé, Will, has died in combat. Or has he? Jennie soon realizes that Quinn has a secret he's not telling--"and the dead cannot defend themselves." With the death of her fiancé, Jennie has no status in the household. She tries to make herself useful as a nurse to Quinn, and helps with various household tasks, becoming more like a servant than a member of the family. But when her uncle asks Jennie to contact a photographer who also has a reputation as a medium, strange things begin to happen. Is Will trying to communicate with her from the grave, or is the spirit photographer playing tricks on her? How can she explain the mysterious events that lead her to discover a lost locket, Will's last letter, and perhaps the secret as to how Will really died--not on the battlefield at all, but as a prisoner at the infamous Andersonville prison camp? There is certainly no shortage of novels for young people about this period, but *Picture the Dead*, with its genre-bending story, makes an important contribution to Civil War novels and would be an excellent purchase for school or public libraries, as well as for any reader who enjoys a good mystery and ghost story.

Picture The Dead by Adele Griffin and illustrated by Lisa Brown is an interesting mystery about a woman & her relationships during the Civil War time. She is an orphan, taken in by a cold Aunt and Uncle. Her twin brothers and her two male cousins are her only friends, and they are sent away to fight in the war. One comes back, and she will not rest until she finds out exactly what happened to the other two....even if it means consulting a medium. The author and illustrator did a beautiful job of capturing the feeling of the Civil War period. I enjoyed the book greatly.

This book has everything I enjoy in a book. A fascinating story that kept me guessing till the very end. Wonderful background story of how the book came about. I am keeping this book for my library and hope to share it with friends. Looking for more books like this.

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