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I Love You, Michael Collins



Synopsis

Editors’ Pick Bests Books of June 2017It’s 1969 and the country is gearing up for what looks to be the most exciting moment in U.S. history: men landing on the moon. Ten-year-old Mamie’s class is given an assignment to write letters to the astronauts. All the girls write to Neil Armstrong ("So cute!") and all the boys write to Buzz Aldrin ("So cool!"). Only Mamie writes to Michael Collins, the astronaut who will come so close but never achieve everyone else’s dream of walking on the moon, because he is the one who must stay with the ship. After school ends, Mamie keeps writing to Michael Collins, taking comfort in telling someone about what’s going on with her family as, one by one, they leave the house thinking that someone else is taking care of her—until she is all alone except for her cat and her best friend, Buster. And as the date of the launch nears, Mamie can’t help but wonder: Does no one stay with the ship anymore? With *I LOVE YOU, MICHAEL COLLINS*, Lauren Baratz-Logsted has created a heartwarming story about family and being true to yourself. A Margaret Ferguson Book

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 800 (What’s this?)

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR) (June 20, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0374303851

ISBN-13: 978-0374303853

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #250,751 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #63 in Books > Children’s Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Exploration & Discoveries #331 in Books > Children’s Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1900s #790

in Books > Children’s Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Parents

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

“The story neatly parallels the astronauts’ journey, and Mamie’s letters to Collins effectively capture her earnest voice . . . Readers will be charmed by Mamie’s story of hope in a difficult

moment in American history. Kirkus Reviews “The story’s momentum builds gradually, culminating in the July space flight, moon walk, and splashdown, events that bring people together . . . The narrative offers accessible dialogue and inherent drama as well as a sense of how the historic Apollo 11 mission affected the folks back home on earth.” Booklist

Lauren Baratz-Logsted is the author of over 25 books for adults, teens and children, including the popular nine-book series *The Sisters*, which she created with her husband and daughter. Before becoming a writer, Lauren was an independent bookseller, *Publishers Weekly* reviewer, freelance editor, sort-of librarian, and window washer. She lives in Danbury, Connecticut, with her family and their cat, Yoyo. She still remembers watching the astronauts land on the moon.

I received this yesterday and read it all last night. It’s a great story about Mamie, a 10-year-old girl who’s trying to figure out a lot of things in her life and pours her heart into a series of letters to Apollo 11 astronaut Michael Collins. She feels drawn to him because he gets less attention than Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. The space race and Apollo 11 flight details do a great job of tying together all the other events in Mamie’s life from a less-than-perfect family to school and friendship issues.

This wonderful book brings to light the importance of the one person who makes the sacrifices to stay behind for the greater good. Baratz-Logsted uses the story of the Apollo 11 space mission to weave a touching story, as told through the letters written by a young girl, about family and friendship that captivates the reader. This young adult book is a perfect selection for any classroom teacher. I’m buying a copy to send in to my daughter’s fifth grade class! Two thumbs up!

In *I Love You, Michael Collins*, Lauren Baratz-Logsted creates a perfect melding of history and fiction in this middle grade story that will be enjoyed by boys and girls and adults. The protagonist, Mamie (who was named after a President’s wife), is different from the other kids her age. Is she on the spectrum? Probably. She thinks differently and speaks in a manner that is much more mature than others her age. She also thinks more maturely, as is evidenced when all the rest of her classmates choose to write to Buzz Aldrin or Neil Armstrong and she decides to write to Michael Collins. No one can understand why she wants to write to the guy who isn’t going to step foot on the moon, but as the story unfolds,

her choice becomes more and more apt. Mamie doesn't stop with just writing Michael Collins one letter. She continues to write to him after school ends for the summer, and the letters tell the story beautifully. Mamie's only friend, Buster, lives next door and he's a truly good best friend. When he learns that Mamie is fascinated with Michael Collins, he joins in and enthusiastically researches the launch and everything about the mission. They celebrate the events together. The reader slowly finds out that Mamie's parents are not happy. When Mamie's mother walks out one night, it's the start of Mamie feeling as if everyone is leaving her alone even Campbell, their cat. But like Michael Collins, who has to stay with the ship to make sure that it's there when Buzz Aldrin and Neal Armstrong return to the ship, Mamie must be strong and guide the ship when no one else is there. Baratz-Logsted pulls off a fabulous feat by providing a great deal of essential background material about the trip to the moon and what was involved, being true to the time period in terms of food and living, while creating a character who is likable, sweet and smart. This book would be a great read aloud and a precursor to studying about the history of space exploration. It's also a wonderful book to lead into talking about family dynamics and friendship.

I am 9 (almost 10). Lauren Baratz-Logsted is one of my favorite authors (try Sisters 8!). I loved this book because it teaches you about some history but it also has a fairy-tale packed inside. Mamie, the main character, is courageous and expressive. It's all about these letters that Mamie writes to an astronaut but it's also about how hard it is when her parents fight. I hope other kids read this because it's worth it!

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