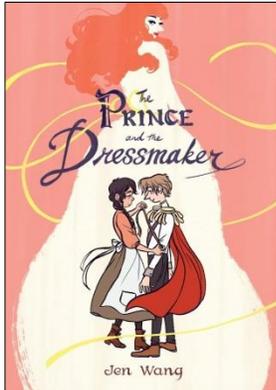


Spotlight on Books



This year I am thrilled to have been chosen as a graphic novel judge for the 2018 Cybils Awards. The Cybils, or Children and Young Adult Bloggers' Literary Awards, have been around since 2006 and are available to children and young adult books from a variety of categories as long as they were published in Canada or the United States.

While we have not received a list of nominated titles yet, I would be shocked and disappointed if Jen Wang's *The Prince and the Dressmaker* is not among them.

No amount of hyperbole could adequately capture how much I enjoyed this book.

The Prince and the Dressmaker is a tale of a Belgian prince, circa the 19th century (the exact time period is never explicitly stated, but I'm assuming based on the fashion), who secretly likes to dress in drag. When he meets a seamstress/ up-and-coming designer named Frances he knows that this is a rare someone who will support his unusual choices and whose dresses are kick-ass to boot. He immediately hires her and a friendship blossoms quickly.

Of course, themes of acceptance and being true to oneself run loudly, but it never seems didactic. Instead, it's an enthralling story, with authentic characters (slightly flawed but plausible and even likeable), and lots of feels (it's funny at times, sad, hopeful, and heartwarming). I also appreciated that the dialogue was kept modern— not slangy, but contemporary, making it easier to understand while not taking away from the setting (it simply felt transcribed for 2018).

And the art is gorgeous. It has a style and colouring similar to Disney cartoons of the 60s and 70s which fits the story like a glove. It has a fairy tale feel (though no fairy tale elements really), with swirls and swishes that complement the fashion angle. The characters are expressive and rich in movement.

If all the Cybils nominees wind up being as good, we will have no easy decision ahead of us.

John Mutford, Library Manager

September 19, 2018