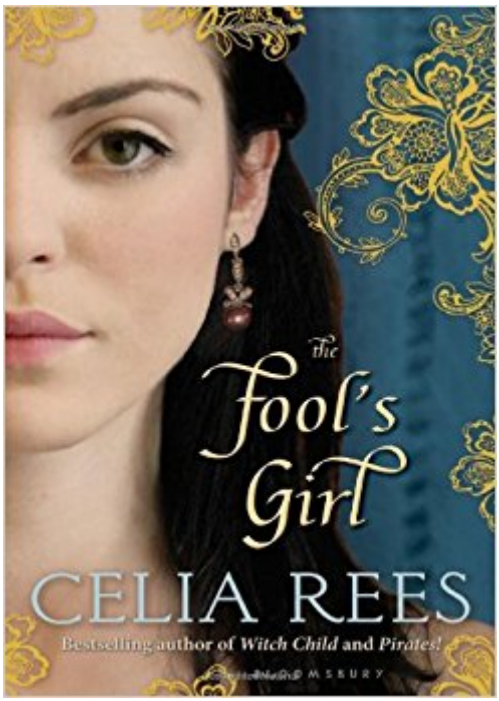
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The Fool's Girl



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Synopsis

Young and beautiful Violetta may be of royal blood, but her kingdom is in shambles when she arrives in London on a mysterious mission. Her journey has been long and her adventures many, but it is not until she meets the playwright William Shakespeare that she gets to tell the entire story from beginning to end. Violetta and her comic companion, Feste, have come in search of an ancient holy relic that the evil Malvolio has stolen from their kingdom. But where will their remarkable quest-and their most unusual story-lead? In classic Celia Rees style, it is an engrossing journey, full of political intrigue, danger, and romance.This wholly original story is spun from Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, and includes both folly and suspense that would make the Bard proud.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 780L (What's this?)

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 8 UpÃ¢â ¬â œThis imaginative continuation of the story of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night focuses on some of the darker and more serious elements of the play and develops them into an original story. Violetta, the daughter of Viola and Orsino, is in exile from Illyria because Sebastian, her mother's brother, has conspired with neighboring Venice to overthrow her father and seize power. She has been protected by the fool Feste, and together the two go to England to recover a precious holy relic that is a national symbol for Illyria. There they meet William Shakespeare, who becomes

embroiled with them in political and religious intrigue involving Malvolio, a Jesuit operative secretly arranging to assassinate Queen Elizabeth I. Events reach a climax during a performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream at a country manor in Stratford on Avon. The book is at its strongest when relating the doings of Shakespeare and other figures of the time, including Richard Burbage, Dr. Simon Forman, and Sir Robert Cecil. Rees's research is impeccable, and the details she includes about daily life and play performance in Elizabethan England are fascinating. The portions of the book set in Illyria do not seem as believable, and not just because of the fantasy and witchcraft elements. This would be an interesting read for a class studying Twelfth Night, as familiarity with the play would help readers understand some of this novel's plot elements.Kathleen E. Gruver, Burlington County Library, Westampton, NJÃ Â© Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Conceived as both a sequel to and the inspiration for Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, this romantic drama brings Violetta, the teenaged daughter of the murdered Duke and Duchess of Illyria, to Elizabethan London in search of an important religious relic stolen by the wicked Malvolio. Accompanied and protected by the capable if moody Fool Feste, Violetta also enlists the middle-aged ShakespeareÃ¢â ¬â •sympathetically cast here as a hardworking artist lonely for his loving wife and familyÃ¢â ¬â •in her quest. Shakespearean-style complications ensue, driven both by the entrance of Violetta's cousin, lifelong love, and possible betrayer, Stephano, and also the revelation that Malvolio is involved in a Catholic plot to assassinate the Queen. Expertly livening the proceedings with intrigues, japes, kisses, mildly bawdy comments (Ã¢â ¬Å“the young are apt to be betrayed by their hearts, and other partsÃ¢â ¬Â•), colorful characters, plot twists, quick violence, and an occasional breath of the supernatural, Rees dishes up a quick-paced tale that builds to a suspenseful climax. Just the ticket for fans of Lisa Klein's Lady Macbeth's Daughter (2009) and the plethora of similar Shakespearean sallies. Grades 8-11. --John Peters

A mild and slightly depressing retelling of a classic comedy. The character development is crude, and there were really no tense or exciting moments. The imagery helps make up for the the lack of character complexity and blasÃƒÂ© story development. Overall it was a mildly amusing distraction occasionally bordering on tedious.

Not gripping like some of her others. Still haven't finished it.

Another great read from Celia Rees. Sovay was the first of her books I read and I fell in love. I recommend both books!

I love how the story of twelfth night continues on with the children. Shakespeare is a major part in this story. Feste is also here....I thought it was a retelling, but it's like a sequel. Very detailed and well written.

One of my favorite authors and this book did not disappoint!

If you are a fan of Shakespeare's 12th night, this story will take your affection for that story & crush it.I'm not sure why the author felt that in order to have a new love story, she needed to trash the one which is was built on.The story does get a happy ending, but for me it was more bitter than sweet.This story is gritty, unpleasant & depressing. The reader has a front row seat to the unraveling of the romance of 12th night and it is tedious & painful. so what happens in the book ?Feste & Duke Orsino (& Violet's) daughter run around & meet all the old 12th night characters.**********spoilers**********Violet :it seems to be implied that she commits suicideOlivia: It seems to be implied that she commits suicide AND liked Violet more than Sebastian. Possibly Lesbianism feelings for VioletSebastian: drunkard & BFFs (& maybe something more?) with Antonio . Ignores Olivia & joins with Pirates & Venetians to make war on Illyria, he sells his son & his niece into slavery .Duke Orsino : Ignores Violet & is immersed in being a Duke & in preparing for war. He is killed when Sebastian's pirate/Venetian army bombard their way into IllyriaSir Toby: same as always, finally dies penniless & inebriatedMaria (his wife) helps Violetta , Stephano & FesteSir Andrew: turns out to be evilMalvoleo :is out for revengeWilliam Shakespeare: jumps into the story & interacts with Violetta & Feste

The better you know Shakespeare's comedies "Twelfth Night, ""As You Like It," and "A Midsummer Night's Dream," the more you will get out of this ambitious and intriguing story for teen readers. The first part of the book wobbles as bit, changing narrators and mixing present action with gritty flashbacks. Once the story settles down (however implausibly) in Shakespeare's London, it becomes more centered, eventually turning into a real page-turner.Celia Rees does a masterful job of bringing to life William Shakespeare, his troupe of actors, and his wife Anne. She creates a convincing picture of the intrigues of the Elizabethan court and the landscape of southern England. Unfortunately, the Illyrian characters, including the heroine, Violetta, are a little less real, even (I

hate to say it) a little Disneyfied, and so are their enemies. On the other hand, the denizens of the Stratford area are delightfully Tolkien-esque (the books, not the movies).I suspect "The Fool's Girl" is a book that will be even more enjoyable on a second reading, when one knows where the story is heading.There are many other YA books about Shakespeare and his acting troupe; including Susan Cooper's time-travel story "King of Shadows" and Harry Turtledove's alternative-history "Ruled Britannia." A thoughtful young reader might want to read and compare several of these. They all have a similar message, that Shakespeare could not have written such enduring masterpieces if he had not been a deeply humane, compassionate, and courageous person.

Twelfth Night was the first Shakespeare play I ever saw, and it remains my very favorite. I was in seventh grade and had been nervous about my own capacity to understand Shakespeare's language. But as soon as the local university production of the comedy began, I was instantly hooked by the romance, the humor, the mistaken identities --- and, yes, by the language, too. The quick-witted Viola, the pompous Malvolio with his ridiculous yellow stockings, the boisterous Sir Toby Belch, and the surprisingly complicated Fool, Feste, all combined to make me fall in love with the Bard.And apparently I'm not alone in my affection for Twelfth Night. Popular author Celia Rees has used the play as the inspiration for her new novel, THE FOOL'S GIRL, providing in her typically detailed, well-researched style both a sequel of sorts to the play and a dramatic explanation of how and why Shakespeare chose to dramatize this story.Short version of Shakespeare's play: Shipwreck victim Viola washes ashore, disguises herself as a boy to gain entry to the court of Duke Orsino, who pines for the countess Olivia even as Viola secretly longs for Orsino himself. When he sends the disguised Viola to plight his troth, Olivia falls for the young messenger instead. Much confusion ensues, but ultimately Orsino and Viola are wed, as are Olivia and Viola's long-lost twin brother, Sebastian.In Rees's novel, Illyria, where Twelfth Night is set, is a real place, known primarily for its possession of a holy relic, the container in which one of the Magi brought a gift to the infant Jesus. But Malvolio, who, since the events eventually memorialized by Shakespeare, has become not only arrogant but also cruel, has stolen the relic and, in the wake of a rebellion staged by Sebastian, left Illyria for England with prisoners in tow. He's bent on seizing another mystical item --- a fortune-telling stone --- and on making life as miserable as possible for Violetta (daughter of Orsino and Viola) and Stephano (son of Olivia and Sebastian). Violetta, accompanied by Feste, is determined to retrieve the relic and restore it to her home country (and, she hopes, restore Illyria's fortunes as well). She and Feste have hatched a plan for the young playwright William Shakespeare to help them. But is it possible that Violetta's childhood friend Stephano has betrayed her? Can she

trust him with her secrets --- and with her heart?Rees's affection for Shakespeare's play shines through every page of THE FOOL'S GIRL. She has provided readers with countless well-researched details about Shakespeare's London, the culture of Elizabethan performance, and the plays themselves. Told in an engaging narrative style that travels forward and backward chronologically and that allows a half-dozen characters to share storytelling duties, the novel unfolds briskly and suspensefully. Like Shakespeare's plays, it treads the line between lyrical and bawdy, as Rees uses earthy humor that would undoubtedly have appealed to Shakespeare's audiences as much as it will to the youth of today.Although THE FOOL'S GIRL will be of most interest to students who have already read Shakespeare's play, it can still be read and enjoyed by those who long for romance, drama, and a heady mix of history, magic and literature. --- Reviewed by Norah Piehl

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