



Castle Diary: the Journal of Tobias Burgess, Page

Books Reviewed:

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

This is a hugely enjoyable slice of medieval life, generously served in picture-book format, boisterously illustrated and packed with character and humour. It is a means of feeding some solid historical fact to 9-12 year olds and presented with such panache and attention to peculiar detail that it is the flavour of another time and place that you will relish.

Platt and Riddell seize every opportunity presented by the year Toby spends as page to his uncle, not only to portray the daily life of the castle and the villagers but also the big occasions ? the hunt, the joust, the harvest and the Christmas festivities. It is a world, too, of small, recognisable domestic dramas and amusements: from an itchy new cotton shirt to some masculine teasing at the butts when Toby?s prowess at archery is less than impressive. Toby is at the right age to be curious about everything, to wander through the different classes of castle and village and to begin to offer his own thoughts on the way the world works.

But beware. The thirteenth century was never like this, even for Toby, a son of the aristocracy. Real Toby would have been unlikely to be able to write and, if he could, would have been a few centuries ahead of his time in compiling a diary. Even less likely would have been the prospect of a cook giving him a sheaf of medieval recipes to copy out. There are several pages of ?Notes for Reader? at the back of the book, which give the historical background to the diary; an excellent index; and a list of sources, many of them adult texts. Despite this show of scholarship, this book is best enjoyed as a story ? one that will make the study of this period more interesting and appealing for its readers.

Running Order:

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