Lovereading4kids Reader reviews of Half A Creature From The Sea by David Almond

Below are the complete reviews, written by Lovereading4kids members.

Jake Fletcher, age 13 -
www.jakesbooks.wordpress.com

If you only want a glimpse at Almond’s work, this is the perfect snapshot. An autobiography with a difference.

The tag-line of this book is ‘A Life in Stories’. It is Almond’s autobiography but unusually, Almond has attempted to tell his life story through a collection of short stories - a fitting idea for an autobiography of one of the country’s best known fiction writers. Each story relates to an area of Almond’s life: football, running, the sea, religion and most noticeably the North of England. He uses locations and people he knew to create stories with a twist. In ‘The Missing Link’, a group of boys try to stop another boy attending Mass, to stop him from getting a blessing. In this story, Almond was exploring how, when he was a boy, missing Mass was seen as a bigger deal than bullying. In other stories, there is a more fantastical element. One story has a father who returns from the dead, whilst another story features a girl finding out that her father is part of the sea. It didn’t matter how strange or wild the story, Almond always links it back to his life and the inspirations and truths behind each story.

‘Half a Creature from the Sea’ is half story, half real life. Almond describes stories as creatures that have become part of his life and writing. Almond’s words take you to a river of stories. Look closely at this river. There are thousands of stories. Sparkling in the water, David Almond’s ‘Half a Creature from the Sea’ is a reflection of the storyteller’s genius.
Aimee Sweet, age 13

‘A story is a journey.
Every word is a footstep.
A story is a life.’

Twisted with emotion, threaded with the smell of the sea, Almond creates both fantasy and reality in this gripping book. All the stories create a world within a world, a story within a story, a life within a life. I love how Almond leaves everything for you to pick up so there is no wrong answer—it just makes everything last so much longer (which is a good thing!). I remember spending nights staring up at my ceiling, seeing things other people cannot see, dreaming about the story I just read, pretending to be in the main character’s footsteps. That is something hard to achieve for an author—for kids like me to dream about their stories. Well, David Almond definitely achieved it.

The cover and the illustrations are completely beautiful, every single one. I loved flipping back through the pages to look at the pictures, I loved looking at the cover for the first time. It is definitely the best cover I have ever seen.

After reading the book, I now know a lot of things about David Almond that I didn’t know before. This is because, within each story there is a connection to Almond. The spider webs that make up all the tales are adorned with tiny crystals of Almonds childhood, each thread inspired by the life of the author. This is mainly why this book is so special— the stories are true in such a way that you can smell the sea salt on the paper, you can hear boys yelling, ‘Goaaallll!’ in the distance. There is a weird mix of reality and fantasy here, a weird mix of both the truth and lies, that puts a special effect to the book like no other.

I also quite liked the introductions before each tale— it made everything easier to picture in my mind.

The age range is 11+ and the publisher is Walker Books. I give this book five stars.

Note: when I say five stars or four star, I mean five out of five.

Emily Kinder, age 13

This powerful set of short stories is typical of David Almond. All set in his childhood village; some are charming, some are dark, all are thought provoking.

The stories are beautifully crafted, most with an edge. The descriptions are
captivating, spinning the place in which they're set in such vivid detail that you can picture it perfectly. It makes everything else seem so real that you become attached to the characters, you feel as if they are actual people - not fictitious at all. In part this must be because they are inspired by people the author once knew, as you learn from the start of each story.

The autobiographical introductions are very interesting, allowing you an insight into the thought process of the author as he was writing. They also provide a bit of background information for each story, which really makes them come alive.

I particularly enjoyed 'May Malone'. The ending is particularly good - not terribly satisfying, but it gave a promise that the future would be better for all the characters.

Throughout the book there is an aspect that normally doesn't appear much in modern books - religion. The emphasis on it, and the changing views, are all shown within the stories. I found this very interesting, mainly because it is about the changing of this deep rooted faith, about the traditions of it.

I really enjoyed this book; it's perfect to dip into, and read and re-read. There's so much depth that you feel more and more involved with every page, until you can see the streets as well as if it was your town, and all the people as if you knew them well.

**Poppy, age 15**

*I thought that 'Half A Creature From The Sea' were beautifully written short stories, told by a spell binding author. They where creative and imaginative, easy to picture and very enjoyable.*

Based on real places and people, I felt like I knew my way around the town by the end.