



# The Mystery of Wickworth Manor

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

Elen Caldecott has built up a reputation for attractive, well crafted modern adventures rooted in the real world and aimed at young readers at the top of KS2. Nor does she disappoint in this, her latest offering. Curtis and Paige are lively and recognisable protagonists. They are very different from each other. Paige is impetuous, emotional and bossy while Curtis is quiet and studious ? and hiding a secret shame. Their quest to solve the mystery of the portrait in the attic sees them become reluctant allies ? and eventually friends.

The adventure moves briskly, well contained within the boundaries of a school residential week organised to ease the transition between Year 6 and the move to secondary school. There are no foreign spies or terrorist attacks. Rather we have a treasure hunt against the background of social history; in this case, the existence of slavery in England in the 18th century. Caldecott employs flashbacks into the past to highlight this theme, linking them to artefacts on show in a museum. This technique allows the author to hint at parallels between Curtis and Christopher but ultimately this could be more confusing than illuminating. However, brisk prose, lively dialogue and adult characters who are satisfyingly stereotypical, will ensure young readers are swept on as the narrative unfolds.

An attractive read for young KS3 readers, and accessible to KS2, one aspect might cause concern; Paige, following her mother's footsteps, uses Tarot cards and at one point organises a séance. This is abortive. Throughout, Caldecott makes it clear that this is part of Paige's character and it is cleverly balanced by Curtis who uses research to establish the facts. It is this studious approach that is successful.

[Read a Q&A with Elen Caldecott](#) [4]

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