



# The Key to Flambards

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[Rebecca Butler](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

This book is designed as a sequel to the series by K.M.Peyton known as the Flambards novels. The book is positioned after the end of the final book in the Peyton series. The narrator is Grace Alice Forbes-Russell, a descendant of Christina, Peyton's protagonist.

Grace is aged fourteen, a city girl. She has always been good at running. One day while she is running she is hit by a car. As a result of the accident one of her legs has to be amputated below the knee. The next summer Grace's mother takes her to a country mansion named Flambards. This is her mother's ancestral home, now become a retreat for artists. Grace's mother has been appointed publicity manager for the project. Unless she is successful in raising money to support the retreat, the site and its extensive lands will be sold to developers. Newbery's novel poses two questions. Can Flambards be saved? And how will Grace adjust to her new life as an amputee?

The novel has a protagonist with a visible impairment, namely the amputation. This in itself is something of a rarity in YA fiction, where disabled characters usually play a minor role, or none at all. Newbery also depicts an unusual range of sentiments on Grace's behalf. Her negative feelings about life as an amputee are presented with complete candour. For instance Grace's parents have separated. She learns that her father's new partner is pregnant. Will her father still love Grace if he has a perfect new child in her place? It is a chilling reflection, and utterly convincing.

As often with Newbery, there are many references to war. Grace's research into the family history of Flambards brings her face to face with many warriors. One of them is named Fergus. He was a combat pilot, shot down in World War One and severely burnt. Grace finds a recorded interview in which he describes horrified children recoiling from him. His bravery inspires Grace to confront her own condition.

One of the Flambards employees is a veteran of the Afghan war, barely coping with the traumatic heritage of that conflict. His struggle and the impact on his family are explored with care and sensitivity.

This novel can be read at several different levels, either as a straightforward narrative or a spiritual voyage. It is not necessary that a new reader should have read the Peyton predecessors. The launch of Newbery's book was held at Copped Hall in Epping, the model for the [Shell House](#) [4].

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