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# The House of Hidden Wonders

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Editor's Choice:

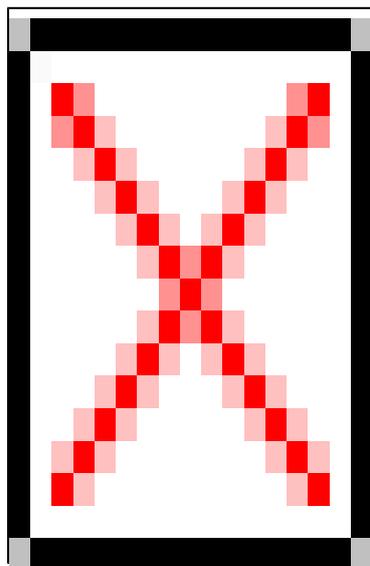
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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5



Victorian Edinburgh in the late Victorian period is a complicated mix of grand houses and wide streets, but it is also the home of ancient hovels that have theoretically been abandoned, but which in fact house the destitute and desperate of society. Zinnie is one of the latter and scrapes a living in order to look after herself and her two ?sisters; young girls who are parentless and because of their backgrounds are deemed to be not worth helping. Zinnie finds herself helping a young Arthur Conan Doyle (a medical student) retrieve a lost watch and soon finds herself caught up in his investigation of mysterious occurrences. When her youngest ?sister? Nell is taken ill, the girls are brought into the world of Sophia Jex-Blake, the first woman doctor in Scotland and the fictional Lady Sarah Montague. Life becomes ever more complicated and dangerous as they discover murder and some very ruthless criminals. Can the girls solve the mysteries and will they be able to escape the horrendous conditions that they have had to live in? You will have to read the story to find out.

If you are a fan of well plotted and exciting crime stories then you will absolutely love this book. The author has mixed a superb blend of historical fact with a brilliant thriller. The atmosphere is intense and you really get a sense of the

conditions in which the girls lived. The Old Town in Edinburgh still exists and you can visit the maze of alleys and lanes, some of which have legends of ghosts and murders. Whilst this is very much an adventure story, full of danger and intrigues it also has some very serious underlying themes. We have the lack of opportunity for women at all social levels, the horrendous difference between rich and poor and levels of discrimination that are almost unimaginable. Each of the three 'sisters' is looked down on for being poor, being black or being Irish. A character who appears later in the book, Aelfine, faces even worse treatment as she would appear to have Down's Syndrome. However, the author uses these things to highlight the strength and courage that the girls show in overcoming these challenges. This is a fantastic story and one that will find a very willing readership among 'middle grade' readers.

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