

The Underneath

By Kathi Appelt

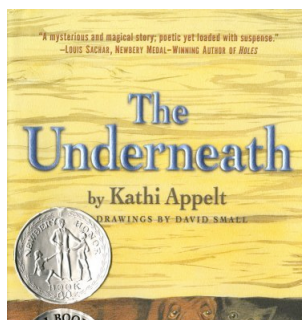


A book review by Samantha

The Underneath is a touching tale about the love between a dog and a small calico cat and her kittens. When the calico cat, with kittens in her belly, hears the mournful baying of Ranger, the bloodhound, she seeks him out and in spite of their differences, befriends him. Ranger names one of the kittens Sabine, and the calico cat names her other kitten, a boy, Puck. Sabine and Puck grow up together in the Underneath, the dark and holy Underneath, a space under the porch. In the Underneath, they are safe from Gar-Face, a man who would use a cat for bait to try and catch the Alligator King, and who had previously shot his dog (Ranger) in the leg and chained him up. But one day, Puck ventures out of the Underneath, and the series of events that follows are not what he expected, wanted, or meant.

Meanwhile, there is another story going on- that of Grandmother Moccasin, a large snake, who is consumed by hatred for everything. She remembers all those who betrayed her as she is trapped in a jar, waiting for a chance to escape.

I loved the poetic writing style of this book. The usage of short sentences and repetition were absolutely perfect. The story was suspenseful, alternating between Grandmother Moccasin's memories and Puck's attempts at escape. I loved how she often referred to the trees to start a chapter. This story will change my writing style dramatically, I am sure of it. Mostly, though, I loved the ending because it tied up everything, down to the hummingbird. My heart gave a leap when Grandmother Moccasin chose love over hate, because the chapter before, it seems like she was going to attack Puck, but instead she breaks the chain, and then dies. It's sad and happy at the same time because she is finally at rest. And of course, it is just heart-lifting that Ranger and the kittens are finally free of Gar-Face, and the chain. I would give this book a ten out of ten, because it was just



amazing.