



The Good Thief

Hannah Tinti

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Richly imagined, gothically spooky, and replete with the ingenious storytelling ability of a born novelist, *The Good Thief* introduces one of the most appealing young heroes in contemporary fiction and ratifies Hannah Tinti as one of our most exciting new talents.

Twelve year-old Ren is missing his left hand. How it was lost is a mystery that Ren has been trying to solve for his entire life, as well as who his parents are, and why he was abandoned as an infant at Saint Anthony's Orphanage for boys. He longs for a family to call his own and is terrified of the day he will be sent alone into the world.

But then a young man named Benjamin Nab appears, claiming to be Ren's long-lost brother, and his convincing tale of how Ren lost his hand and his parents persuades the monks at the orphanage to release the boy and to give Ren some hope. But is Benjamin really who he says he is? Journeying through a New England of whaling towns and meadowed farmlands, Ren is introduced to a vibrant world of hardscrabble adventure filled with outrageous scam artists, grave robbers, and petty thieves. If he stays, Ren becomes one of them. If he goes, he's lost once again. As Ren begins to find clues to his hidden parentage he comes to suspect that Benjamin not only holds the key to his future, but to his past as well.

The Good Thief Details

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From Reader Review The Good Thief for online ebook

Elaine says

Ren had no memory of his life before St. Anthony's. The only clues to his past is the initials REN sewn into the collar of his nightshirt and his missing left hand. One day a stranger, Benjamin Nab, comes to St. Anthony's looking for him, claiming to be his older brother, and reeling off a story of high adventure that explains both how Ren lost his hand and the reason he was left at St. Anthony's. However, Ren soon discovers that Benjamin Nab is not at all who he claims to be, but instead is a smooth talking con man that hopes to use Ren's disability in order to pull off more lucrative cons. When Ren decides, against his better judgment, to throw his lot in with Nab, he realizes that his life is never going to be the same again.

This contemporary book is a classic adventure story with the literary style and singular characters that will remind the reader of the works of Robert Louis Stevenson, Charles Dickens, and/or Mark Twain. It is a well-written, fast-plotted, thoroughly enjoyable read that holds up very well to these hefty comparisons.

Danaca says

I had read a couple of good reviews about this book but it didn't live up to my expectations. I almost abandoned it when it didn't draw me in during the first chapters. I did complete it and I did become more interested in the story as it went on. It has an assortment of colorful characters and I was rooting for the main character by the end.

Dennis Willingham says

To seriously compare this to Dickens, Twain or Stevenson is like saying Taco Bell is great Mexican food. Dickensian in that there are unexpected, hidden benefactors and dangerous, illegal undertakings by a young orphan but it's shallow as a dishpan, don't expect any scope or depth. I found this in the new book section of my library, maybe it should have been in the teens or kids section. (I would say it was written to a junior high level) Never could figure out what the era of the book was, one chapter had people abducted by indians, the next mentioned accounting machines. I'm at a loss to understand the accolades this book gathered.

joyce g says

A wonderful tale with beautifully crafted characters. Just plain wonderful

Stacy says

I really liked this book. It was heartwarming. I couldn't put it down, I wanted to know what would happen next. A favorite for sure.

Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says

Definitely a young adult novel, although not billed as such.

This is like a cross between a Charles Dickens hard luck tale and a Stephen King creepfest. There's a chunk in the middle where it dwells too long on the grave-robbing antics, but otherwise it's quite entertaining.

Worth reading just for the weird characters. There's Dolly (man with woman's name), the giant murderer who sleeps *underneath* the mattress. And Mrs. Sands, the very tall landlady who says everything at maximum volume, even when she's deathly ill. And the dwarf who "drops in" (heh heh) for supper and socks.

I really liked Ren, the scrappy little one-handed kleptomaniac orphan boy. He does bad things, but he has a conscience and is always trying to make it up to people after he steals from them or hurts them.

Hannah Tinti has a bizarre imagination. I would read another book from her.

Now I want to read *The Lives of the Saints* just to see what people can be made to believe when it's put in a religious context.

Rebecca says

Don't believe anyone who tells you anything good about this book. The reviews on the back cover will be the first lies you'll have to ignore. This book belongs in a trash can. You should thank me, because I've done the hard work of reading it so you don't have to.

The Good Thief (aka, *The Bad Book*) is meant to be a historical fiction novel for adults that tells the coming-of-age story of a 12 year-old orphan boy who learns to live with a pair of rough and tumble thieves in early 1800s America. Sounds somewhat intriguing, right? But don't get too excited. As a piece of historical fiction, this book fails almost every test: Did the author do enough research? No. Did she do a good job of making you get a sense of the time period, through skillful use of details and general ambience? No. Did the author call up a vivid sense of place or historical moment? Absolutely not. Did she tie in the action to the larger political or social events of the time? Nope. As far as the reader is concerned, this story is taking place in a social and political vacuum, in a non-descript area that has some trees. Ok, so maybe this is just supposed to be an adventure story that happens to take place in the past. That's cool. But the adventure is not even the sort that we care about. Oh no! A band of mysterious men wearing HATS (of all things!) is chasing after the group! They seem to have an aura of fear around them, which is somehow connected to their HATS! (The hats are totally irrelevant, as it turns out.) Oh no, the main characters are robbing graves to make money! Creeeeepy! (Not really.) Oh no, Ren stole something! (But it's ok because he's nice to horses and thus not really a bad person at all!)

Ok, so perhaps this novel fails as historical fiction and fails as adventure. But maybe it could still succeed as a poignant coming-of-age tale? The only hitch there is that the main character never actually grows up. By the end of the story, he's still a dirty orphan who mistreats his two childhood friends, still doesn't have a clear sense of his place in the world, and isn't nearly as moral as the author would have us believe. He's just a self-absorbed, snotty little kid. His coming-of-age consisted of learning that the moral rules of the real world outside his Catholic orphanage were more pliable than he imagined. Whoo. So he became a street punk -- and not even a charming one at that. That hardly qualifies as a poignant coming-of-age story, in my opinion. Reviewers kept comparing him to Huck Finn and Oliver Twist, which either means they haven't read the

novels that those characters come from and just want to sound smart, or they think all boys who have adventures away from their parents are somehow all alike.

So this book fails every test we can think of for the genres that it taps into. But, a charitable reader might think, perhaps the book has a good message to make up for it!

The "message" of the story (such as it is) is that people society normally considers bad (like thieves and murderers and grave robbers) can have good, warm hearts and hardy friendships. The only problem is that we never actually get any evidence that these guys have good, warm hearts, and their relationships with each other aren't very deep or meaningful. The only time the main character, Ren, is ever kind is when dealing with the group's horse. In fact, whenever the action is getting too "manly" or "rough," the author will have Ren reflect fondly on the horse as a way of making him a sympathetic character. It's the classic "you can trust this character because they're nice to animals!" trope, and Ren's goodness doesn't go much beyond that. But Ren is nice to horses AND he steals things -- what rich ambiguity! It's as though the author was using the formula "good" + "thief" = complex character. Oooh, and it makes a nice, catchy title for the book: The Good Thief! Get it, because he's a thief, but he's also just a plain old good guy? The world is full of all kinds of interesting folks!

But perhaps, you might want to ask, the story has a good villain? Well, I already mentioned the pointless Hat Men who stalk the countryside being ineffective and hatty. But there's also a fat Irishman in a yellow suit who owns a mousetrap factory, which you know is evil because it pumps black smoke into the sky! BWHAHHAHAHAHA! You thought you had seen it all! This guy is like a mustache-twirling villain from a Disney straight-to-DVD movie about plucky children outwitting the rotund and mean factory owner, who stands there watching the mousetraps piling up and rubbing his sweaty hands with glee. He's about as flat a villain as you could ask for, and him being Irish, or the fact that he makes mousetraps, or his weird candy fetish, never actually have any bearing on the story.

And then there's the dwarf. The roof-dwelling dwarf who makes toys out of wood. The dwarf who serves absolutely no purpose in the story. I am at a loss to explain this character's presence in the story. He's the brother of a crazy landlady, and he eats preserves out of jars and reads fancy books in his shack on top of a roof. And I think I'll leave it at that. I just wanted to warn you that if you do read this book against my warnings, be prepared for a Pointless Dwarf.

Between the Irish mousetrap guy and the dwarf, I thought I might have accidentally stumbled into a piece of children's literature, despite the fact that I found the book in the normal fiction section of the bookstore. Here's the thing: this book won the Alex Award, which is given to books intended for adults, but that have a "special appeal" for teens and children. I think by "special appeal for teens and children" they mean simplistic writing that middle schoolers can easily follow and a plot that's about as rich and nuanced as a made-for-TV kids' adventure movie. Tinti's writing style is about as skull-crushingly pedestrian as it comes. Here's my re-enactment of her narrative style for you: "First the characters did this. Then they did this. After that, they went here. Then they went there. Suddenly, this happened. Then they all did this. And then they found a place to sleep for the night." I don't think Tinti had discovered the subordinate clause by the time she wrote this, but perhaps for her second novel, she'll have learned what those fancy "clauses" are all about.

This book is amazing. Here are all the things that amaze me about it: I'm amazed it is actually considered an adult book; I'm amazed it made it through the front door of an editor's office and into the real world, rather than being quietly dropped down a garbage chute; I'm amazed that people (including me) have paid money for this book; and I'm amazed that reputable newspapers have given it good reviews and that some organizations actually felt it deserved awards. Simply amazing.

David says

This was a random pick from the library because the cover caught my eye. I'm glad it did — Hannah Tinti's debut novel is very readable, and superior to most YA fiction, but part of its problem is that the author couldn't seem to quite decide whether this was YA or not. You will see a lot of reviewers comparing it to Dickens and Robert Louis Stevenson, mainly because it's about a hard-luck orphan (missing a hand for as long as he can remember) who embarks upon a fantastic if rather dark and creepy adventure. But other than those superficial similarities, I hardly think Tinti's prose resembles either Dickens or Stevenson. There are occasional literary flourishes and some cleverness, and an awful lot of imagination, but the depth isn't quite there to make this an American classic.

The addition of mad doctors doing bad things with corpses and naked dwarves coming down chimneys gets added comparisons to Stephen King or Mary Shelley. But again — no, not really either of them in style or tone.

Ren's childhood is not quite as hard-luck as *Oliver Twist's* — the monks of St. Anthony's are stern but not cruel. The yearning of Ren and his friends for a family to adopt them, and their fear of being impressed into the army (the fate of those boys who aren't adopted) is an almost-effective tug at the heartstrings. Ren is a far more believable orphan boy than Harry Potter, and not quite as melodramatic as *Oliver Twist*.

A con artist named Benjamin Nab shows up with a fantastic tale, claiming that he is Ren's older brother. Ren quickly figures out he's not, but goes along with Nab and his partner and learns the arts of lying, thieving, and "fishing." Like most glib traveling con men, Benjamin Nab's luck runs out and he attracts the attention of more dangerous people. This eventually leads to Ren (of course) discovering the truth about his parentage.

Ren makes a variety of friends, from the hard-of-hearing, eternally-shouting landlady Mrs. Sands to the murderous giant Dolly, and the mousetrap girl known only as "the Harelip." (In fairness, none of the "hat boys" are ever named either.) These sorts of zany characters and a slightly whimsical tone make this an entertaining and imaginative book, but also made me unable to really take it seriously when Tinti tried to shift into dark and creepy mode. It was like reading *Peter Pan* where you've just seen Peter partying with the Lost Boys and Tiger Lily, and then Captain Hook comes along and actually *kills* someone. Oh, is this the part where shit gets real?

(Yeah, I didn't like *Hook* either.)

But, it's still a good read with likable characters you root for by the end. Hannah Tinti is a promising author who kind of reminds me of Laini Taylor, except in Taylor's case, I thought her writing was great while her story fell flat, while Hannah Tinti's story was compelling and never lost me, but her writing was lacking a "wow" factor for me.

3.5 stars, which I am rounding up because I'm feeling generous.

Maren says

This is a book that was almost oversold by the incredible praise on the cover. With comparisons to Dickens and Twain in the same breath, I was prepared to be disappointed by Hannah Tinti's debut novel, *The Good*

Thief. However, I found that the characters and plot were compelling and she merits some of the comparison. The book feels Dickensian with it's one-handed, orphan hero, Ren who is whisked away from the monastic orphanage into a life of grave-robbing and thievery all while attempting to do the moral thing and discover more about his obscure origins. Children's novels about orphans with uncertain parentage are not unusual but this one is a cut above the rest with well-drawn characters, atmospheric language, and a willingness to embrace interesting ethical questions.

The beginning of the story while Ren is living at the Catholic orphanage may seem slow-paced but it sets up his moral crises to come. It is also allows her to make some nice touches like the reference to St. Anthony, patron of lost things, appropriate both to the boys at the orphanage and to the small items Ren feels compelled to steal.

Tinti also sets her story in 19th Century New England. I felt the story could be in any country and so I was a bit disappointed that the American setting never really entered into the tale in a more specific way.

The characters, a thief, a drunken former schoolmaster, a murderer for hire, a dwarf, the unhappy proprietress of a boarding house with a propensity for beating people with brooms, the unlucky twins and unfortunate girls forced to work in a mousetrap factory are colorful and compelling. But it is the complicated Ren and his attempts to be good who draws the reader and makes it such a satisfying read.

I also respect Tinti for allowing her characters to discover unpleasant truths. She doesn't condescend to her readers, adult or child.

The story was left somewhat open-ended so I suspect that if Ren is successful there will be more books about his adventures.

Barb says

I can not believe that this book was even published let alone that it won an award that gained the author ten grand. I think it may be the worst book I have ever read.

The writing was sophomoric, if that advanced. There was no character development there was no logic, and there was no context to the ridiculous and absurd story. There is nothing in this tale that makes any sense whatsoever.

The author has failed to create anything realistic in this story. She offers details that might give the reader a clue about the time period the story is set but together they don't offer any more insight to the date the events unfold. There is a wedding band inscribed with the year 1831, there is a copy of *The Deerslayer* which was published in 1841, there are many references to soldiers. Were they fighting the civil war? If so this story takes place in the 1860s, but the only reference to the war is mentioning the soldiers. The author also places a street lamp on the road which would have happened after 1879.

Period and politics always shape the way people think and their attitudes. But the author fails to show the reader either of these. There is no explanation of why church goers would be so overly eager to give their hard earned money to a maimed child in the street. I didn't find anything in this story that made any sense.

I kept reading thinking it might take a turn for the better at some point. I kept wondering how Elizabeth Gilbert, Janet Maslin and Ron Charles could say the wonderful things they said on the cover of this book. I'm

still wondering how they could sing the praises of this book with a straight face but I'm beginning to suspect why they did it. Though Janet Maslin's quote "with touches of Harry Potterish whimsy" has to be the most bogus of them all.

I like dark and I am happy to enjoy well written stories where bodies are dug up from graves, where horrible things happen to people, where some of the characters are rotten, manipulating, selfish, cheating liars. All of those sound like fine ingredients to a potentially wonderful story in my opinion. This however was just horrid, it went from bad to worse with the author failing to make any logical progression in this absurd story.

It's difficult to really describe the awfulness of this book without giving some specific details. I'm going to have to offer some examples, so if you don't want to have any of the many surprises spoiled for you this is where you should stop reading.

S P O I L E R * A L E R T

This is where I get specific about the horrors of this novel.

I made note of many things that just didn't make any sense in this story. It was almost as if the author wasn't able to create a plausible or logical explanation for events and so instead she made up things that were completely absurd.

Starting with the story that Benjamin tells father John at St Anthony's. Why tell a story at all? There isn't any need for the far fetched tale he could have just said that he wanted the boy as a companion.

Then they tell Mr. Bowers the dentist, that Ren has a tooth ache and let him look in his mouth, why, made no sense, and was unnecessary.

Ren trying to kiss the horse as they are leaving the sheep shearing field, Benjamin tells Ren to kiss him instead of the horse.

Benjamin tells Ren 'don't let me down' but the author has failed to show the reader any type of relationship between the two characters or any reason why Ren wouldn't want to let him down.

Tom and Benjamin send Ren off to deal with the corrupt doctor at the hospital alone. There is a big production about how the delivery of bodies will be handled and the doctor gives Ren the keys to all the gates. Yet we later learn that there is a handy-dandy chute for depositing dead bodies and no key is required.

On their first trip to dig up bodies they are able to dig up four corpses in one night, all supposedly fresh and oh, by the way one of them just happens to be alive after all and is wearing a purple velvet suit. Benjamin Tom and Ren take this man back to their place of lodging and keep him there. He discloses to Ren that he is a murderer and then he goes downstairs and imprisons the landlady in a crate. Benjamin comes to her aid with another absurd story and the landlady beats them all out the door with a broom. And that takes you to about the half way point in the story. Pretty bad and it doesn't get any better.

Overall a waste of time and money not to mention the trees that were sacrificed for this horrid novel.

jo says

many thanks to the gr giveaways program for this free book.

let me just say that i don't read historical adventures. like, ever. i just don't. so you see, this is very anomalous

for me. when i entered the giveaway i must have heard terrific things about this book because *i don't read historical adventures*. petty thieves, highwaymen, hardscrabble robbers, little orphans, and horse and carriages are simply not in my libidinal purview. but then....

then, i started this book and finished it in like two days. many reviews point out two things: the unusual old-fashionedness of this commercial and critical success and the fact that the book makes you feel like you felt when you were a child and read the books that carried you through afternoons that were over in the blink of an eye. when i read this i felt some of what i felt as a child when a book blotted out the world.

this is a book full of people and things and tactile feelings and smells and tapping of horse's hooves and creaking of old boards. it's a beautiful written adventure that starts all low-key and strange (cuz, i mean, what kind of book is this? am i really reading *this now* ?) and stays low-key for a little while until it builds up speed and runs so fast the horse stumbles and the carriage flies over it and suddenly you're airborne.

and at the end you are so happy you read it, if there were another one like it you'd start it immediately. no, for real.

just so you know, hannah tinti took seven years to write this book. a seamless, compressed, tight, and consistent adventure story that ties all the strings in a beautiful final bow cannot be improvised. and then of course there is all the historical research.

i ask forgiveness for the three stars. at the end of the day, this is still not my genre. at the end of the day, i prefer lucubrations to story. but if you want to spend a couple of days forgetting all about the trump inauguration, seriously, you could do much, much worse.

Betsy says

This has lots of memorable characters and is chock full of violent and horrific plot points. Ultimately, I didn't feel that the narrative held together cohesively enough for me to highly recommend the book to other readers. I wanted to understand better why the main character Ren was so drawn to Dolly, the giant murderer or to Mrs. Sands. Why wasn't Mrs. Sands' dwarf brother's character more developed? What was the motivation behind the mousetrap girl known as Harelip's helping Benjamin and Ren? What was the deal with the rest of the mousetrap girls and the hat boys? As you can see, I kept reading because there were so many unanswered questions and memorable characters. I just wanted to know more about what motivated these characters and how it fit into the larger story. Ren's coming of age from Catholic orphan to one-handed thief was well done. I just felt that most of the other characters weren't developed to the same level. It is also highly possible that this just isn't my kind of book because of the violence and the unrelenting bleakness of the plot and setting.

Zoeytron says

It is New England sometime in the 1800's. St. Anthony's monastery is a de facto orphanage for lost boys. It smells of boiled fish, and the orphaned boys who live there are lice ridden and perpetually hungry. Ren was left on the grounds there as a wee baby, found wrapped in a blanket and missing his left hand. Now a young lad of ten or so, he and his fellow orphans have been raised after a fashion by Brother Joseph, who direly

portends that bad luck always follows anything that's good, bad things always happen in groups of three, and with any given set of twins, one is good and the other is always bad.

A man by the name of Benjamin Nab takes Ren from the monastery after convincing Brother Joseph that he is Ren's brother. Thievery is Benjamin's game, and he sees how Ren's missing appendage might garner some sympathy for them or provide a distraction during the pursuit of his various con jobs. He is right, and Ren realizes that what they are doing is stealing, even as Benjamin insists on referring to it as 'borrowing, with good intent'. All the same, Ren feels 'God's eye upon him, like a pointed stick at the back of his neck'. The irony of having a pair of thieves, one of whom has only one hand, and the other with the surname of 'Nab' is not lost here. My compliments to the author for this bit of fun.

Old Mrs. Sands, the landlady, is pure gold. She speaks only in shouts, and one of her nostrils is conspicuously larger than the other. She has a soft heart, but will not hesitate to take her broom to any tenant who dares transgress and thrash him around the head and shoulders with it. She allows as to how honest people don't sleep late in the mornings. There is a roof-dwelling dwarf who has a predilection for reading Shakespeare and crafting tiny toys. We also have a murderous giant of a man named Dolly, who is putty in Ren's hand.

What did not work for me was the dialogue of Mr. McGinty, owner of the mousetrap factory. He was the only character whose speech was written with a thick New England accent and I don't quite understand why that would be when no one else's lines reflected it. He can't be the only man in town who affects the dialect of the region.

Good story, and yes, we find out how Ren lost his hand.

Celeste Ng says

A recent piece in the New York Times asked whether adult women could ever read like girls: fully immersed, draped over any convenient surface, oblivious to the outside world, glued to the book in hand. This is a book that made me read like a girl. I haven't enjoyed a book so fully since I was about 12.

Melinda says

I learned nothing from this frivolous stupid story about people I didn't care about and I hate it when the end of a book is sugar-coated, dipped in chocolate, blasted with high-fructose corn syrup and dusted in sparkly confectioners' sugar all before wrapping it up in a fancy, neat little bow. YUCK!!! I can't believe this book is being marketed to adults. If it wasn't about grave robbers and drunken binges, it could be marketed as YA fiction...but even my 18 year old niece would have found this book repulsive. No interesting characters, a plot that tried to be fanciful and magical realism fell so flat that I can't wait to get it out of my mind and out of my house. Unfortunately, I am hosting the book club meeting for this book...Luckily, it wasn't my pick. It also is NOT a good discussion book, because there isn't any hidden meanings or metaphor. All and all, one of the worst books I have read. Elizabeth Gilbert should be embarrassed to have her rapturous words about what a wonder of a book it is on the cover. Shame... Anything to get your name in print, eh?

Steven Walle says

The Good Thief was an excellent read. In it a boy of just a few weeks of age was brought to an orphanage called ST. Anthony's. Here he grew up being badly abused by the Father and dreaming of the day he would be adopted. This young man was deformed, however. His Mother had cut his hand off so it made it almost impossible for him to be adopted.

Finally he was adopted and lived a crazy dangerous life style as a thief and grave robber. I will not tell the ending but it was amazing. I recommend all read this very well written book. It is quite a page turner.

Enjoy and Be Blessed.

Diamond

Steve says

This was a book I saw Richard Russo recommend in an interview. I'm glad I made a note of it. How can you not like a story about a smart, one-handed orphan kid and his adventures with a cast of mysterious lowlifes in the 1800's? Tinti tells it well. She managed to sneak in some thoughts on loyalty, commitment and morality, too. The pages turned all too well, even as I was dodging fellow commuters on my walk to work.

George K. says

Το βιβλίο κυκλοφόρησε στα ελληνικά απ' τις εκδόσεις Πηλός τον Οκτώβριο του 2013 και εγώ το αγόρασα τις πρώτες κιόλας μέρες, αφού πέστηκα τόσο απ' την περιληψη της ιστορίας, όσο και απ' κάποιες συγκεκριμένες κριτικές ξένων αναγνώστών. Πριν μ'θω τι θα το βλέπαμε στα ελληνικά, δεν ξέρα τίποτα ούτε για την συγγραφέα, ούτε για το βιβλίο, όμως κάτι μου λέγε τι θα μου έρεσε. Και έτσι γινε. Πραγματικά το ευχαριστήθηκα πάρα πολύ το βιβλίο και αναρωτιέμαι γιατί περιμένα σχεδόν τσσερα χρόνια μέχρι να φιλοτιμηθώ να το διαβάσω.

Τι λέει η περιληψη: Σε ένα ορφανοτροφείο της Νέας Αγγλίας τον 19ο αιώνα ο δωδεκάχρονος Ρεν αγωνιέ για το αν θα βρεθεί ποτέ οικογένεια για εκείνον κι αναρωτιέται τι να απ'γινε παράγε το κομμένο αριστερό του χέρι. Ο μυστηριώδης κήριος Ναμπ, που μια κάποια μέρα ρχεται να τον πάρει, θα του διηγηθεί μυστηριώδεις ιστορίες και ταυτόχρονα θα τον κ'νει μέλος μιας αλλόκοτης Αυλής των Θαυμάτων, μιας συντροφικής περιθωριακ'ν μικροαπατε'νων και κλεφτών. Μαζ' τους θα ζήσει συναρπαστικές περιπέτειες που θα τον οδηγ'σουν έλο και πιο βαθι' στις σκοτεινές γωνιές εν'ς τ'που γ'ριου, 'που θα γνωρ'σει το γ'κλημα, τη βαρβαρότητα, την απογο'τευση αλλ' και τη φίλα και την αλληλεγγ'η, 'σπου να φτ'σει τελικά σε κάτι που θεωρ'σε χαμένο για πάντα: την αλήθεια.

Το βιβλίο ακολουθε' πιστ' τα χ'ν'ρια συγγραφέων 'πως οι Τσαρλς Ντ'κενς, Μαρκ Του'ιν, Ρ'μπερτ Λο'ις Στ'βενσον και Χ'ρμαν Μ'λβιλ. Θυμ'ζει 'ντονα 'λες αυτ'ς τις κλασικές και συναρπαστικές περιπέτειες που διαδραματ'ζονται κατ' τον 19ο αιώνα κ'που στις Ηνωμένες Πολιτε'ες, με τον πρωταγωνιστ' να ε'ναι κατ' κ'ριο λ'γο μικρ' παιδ' ' νεαρ'ς, που μπλ'κει σε δ'σκολες και επικ'νδυνες καταστ'σεις. Η Τ'ντι καταφ'ρνει να περ'σει την ατμ'σφαιρα μιας 'λλης εποχ'ς, προσφ'ρει δρ'ση, 'νταση και αγων'α, αλλ' και ενδιαφ'ροντες χαρακτ'ρες. Η γραφ' μου 'ρεσε

π?ρα μα π?ρα πολ?, ?τσι σ?γουρη και χωρ?ς περιττολογ?ες ?πως ?ταν, με ολοζ?ντανες περιγραφ?ς των διαφ?ρων καταστ?σεων, των τοπ?ων και των χαρακτ?ρων.

Γενικ? ?χουμε να κ?νουμε με μια παλαι?ς κοπ?ς περιπ?τεια, γραμμ?νη με ζωντ?νια και αρκετ? ?νταση. ?σον αφορ? εμ?να, κατ?φερε με εξαιρετικ? ευκολ?α να με μεταφ?ρει στην Ν?α Αγγλ?α του 19ου αι?να και μ'?κανε ?να με τις περιπ?τειες του μικρο? πρωταγωνιστ? και ?λων των ιδια?τερων ατ?μων που γν?ρισε στην πορε?α. Ε?ναι ?να βιβλ?ο συναρπαστικ?, με κινηματογραφικο?ς ρυθμο?ς, φρεσκ?δα και κωμικοτραγικ?ς καταστ?σεις. Εντ?ξει, σε κ?ποια σημει?α υπ?ρχουν υπερβολ?ς και σε ?λλα χρ?σιμες ευκολ?ες, εν? λε?πουν τα... βαθ?τερα νο?ματα, ?μως εντ?λει δεν πα?ει να ε?ναι ?να ?κρως ψυχαγωγικ? και απολαυστικ? μυθιστ?ρημα. Μπορε? να μην ε?ναι για ?λα τα γο?στα, αλλ? αν λατρε?ετε τις κωμικοτραγικ?ς περιπ?τειες που μυρ?ζουν "κλασικο?ρα", τ?τε ορμ?ξτε ?φοβα.

Laura says

Hannah Tinti's *The Good Thief* well deserves (and even invites) comparison with classic riproaring nineteenth-century adventure tales and orphan narratives. With an action-packed plot and a skillfully created universe, Tinti pulls her readers in to a story about stories—a tale in which the tale-tellers have power to create and re-create the past, all the while manipulating their futures.

Ren, missing a hand and a history, falls swiftly into the world of Benjamin Nab, who claims to be Ren's older brother and the key to his past. Ren, a clear analogue to the orphaned-boy-brought-up-by-hand type of character that dominates the novels of Dickens, Stevenson, and others, is all too eager to welcome his older brother. Nab weaves a skillful tale of Ren's past, both to Ren's guardian priest, and to Ren himself, who eagerly strokes the scalped locks of his dead parents as Nab tells of their demise. Quickly, though, Ren discovers Nab's identity: a con-man, common horse-thief, and resurrectionist in need of a boy to garner his marks' sympathy.

Ren and Nab encounter a motley cast of characters during the course of their exploits: a deaf old woman, a harelipped girl who labors in a mousetrap factory, a dwarf, and a man in a green velvet suit who's been "resurrected" from the dead, among others. Ren's world becomes dreamlike as he watches these characters and characters from his past float into view. Each character narrates their own story, and add something to Ren's own narrative of his life. In the end, faced with the truth, it's the story Ren's able to create from his experiences that saves him.

Though Tinti has created a compelling world for Ren, and smartly populated it with references to great adventure and intrigue novels of the past, the tale rings flat. In a tale that insists stories have great meaning and power, Ren's story ultimately wields little power save that of reference to and reflection of other great stories. References to *David Copperfield*, *Kidnapped*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Great Expectations* do not a powerful story make. *The Good Thief* has merits, and is a well-crafted, page-turning adventure tale of a type not often published today. However, for a more meaningful statement on the power of tales from the past to speak to our lives today, readers are best off turning to novels such as Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip*, a tale that transcends mere reference to Dickens and, by being itself transformative, further illuminates the transformative power of story.

Charlene Intriago says

I was pleasantly surprised at how much I liked this book. Set in New England in the late 1800s, Ren is a 12 year old boy who was left in an orphanage when he was an infant and is missing his left hand. One day a man named Benjamin Nab comes to claim him telling a wild tale about how Ren is his long, lost brother. The friars have no idea if the story is true, but they don't mind getting rid of one more orphan - so Ren is out the door with Benjamin Nab. Benjamin and his partner Tom are pretty much grifters and will do anything for a buck. They feel a boy without a hand will serve them nicely as they swindle people out of money. They get into lots of scrapes, but the story of how Ren finds out who he is and where he came from is the best part. The author does a great job of putting it all together.

Thank you Goodreads for the copy of this book.