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A Riveting Finale for A Great Trilogy

The Taker's Key. Martine Bates. Red Deer, 1998. 186 pp. \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-88995-184-5.

Martine Bates is an exciting author who has broken into the young adult market with a spellbinding fantasy trilogy: *The Dragon's Tapestry*, *The Prism Moon* and now *The Taker's Key*. The first two books in the trilogy are very well-written, with intriguing, fast-paced plot-lines, excellent characterization and a fantasy setting that rapidly becomes as familiar as one's own backyard. The third novel follows in their footsteps.

The Taker's Key finds the young Wizard of Ve, Marwen, facing two foes at the outset. The first is the unknown being who is stealing the magic of Ve, thus destroying a kingdom dependent on magic in every aspect of life. The second is the hostility and disbelief of most of the Oldwives, the primary workers of magic in the kingdom, who must support the Wizard if she can prove that she is, indeed, the rightful heir to the Wizard's staff. By setting Marwen against two foes at once, the second of whom she must win over rapidly if she is to discover and defeat the first, Bates sets up incredible dramatic tension while plunging the reader straight into a riveting plot.

The pace does not falter throughout the novel, as Marwen and the Oldwives travel together to find the Key that will restore magic to the land, while also seeking the dragon whom they discover is stealing their magic. The clever twists in the plot keep the story from becoming boring or predictable.

Further, the characters are completely engaging. The reader can rapidly distinguish the caustic Oldwife Brott from the whining apprentice Ona, the quietly supportive Bashag from the doubting yet open Manape. Marwen herself is strong and true to the character developed throughout the trilogy, while she continues to develop even further in this novel. By the end of the quest for the Key, she has grown even deeper in power and strength. She has

faced her greatest demons and won, even as she gives up the one thing most important to her.

The only place where the characterization of Marwen seems inconsistent is in the ending when, rather than live with the Prince and husband she loves, she stays in her Oldwife cottage to serve the people of her village. Yet, such a sacrifice is in line with the strong, independent character Bates has developed, who can indeed love both passionately and selflessly.

This trilogy is not to be missed by young adult *or* adult lovers of fantasy.

Weet's Quest: An Exciting Dinosaur Adventure

Weet's Quest. John Wilson. Napoleon, 1997. 161 pp. \$8.95 paper. ISBN 0-929141-52-0.

John Wilson's first children's novel, *Weet*, is geared for youngsters who love stories about dinosaurs. However, it is also an exciting adventure that most preteens will enjoy. Like *Weet*, *Weet's Quest* will entrance the same varied group of readers.

Weet's Quest is set some months after the protagonists, Eric and Rose, with their dog Sally, have returned to modern times after travelling to the Late Cretaceous period in the previous adventure. They returned to their own time *prior* to their adventure in Weet's world. In *Weet's Quest*, the three return to Weet's world, this time after a terrifying car accident. This transitional device, which transports the protagonists to Weet's world, is initially effective. However, there are problems with this device. The question of how the protagonists could have survived the horrendous car accident that flung them into Weet's world is problematic. Another problem is that they always arrive back in our time *before* the accidents that propel them into Weet's time so they can avoid those accidents the second time, which just seems too neat.

However, the novel is an exciting read. The children meet Weet as he is on a quest to find his ancestors who live over the mountains, and go through many adventures with him. Eric and Rose are somewhat flat as characters, not developing at all. Eric's tendency to take control of every situation, even in a world where he is a visitor, is annoying at times. But Weet is an interesting character, and Wilson obviously had fun creating him and making him convincing. He is a dinosaur with human shape, but without the ability to change facial expressions or laugh, as his lizard-like exterior is not flexible enough. He is, however, similar enough in his interests and emotions to be likeable, so that the reader can really engage with this alien yet familiar youngster from another species.

Wilson's portrayal of the other dinosaurs is extremely accurate, using the most up-to-date facts about dinosaurs, and even bringing in convincing evidence that dinosaurs were, in fact, warm-blooded, a theory which is