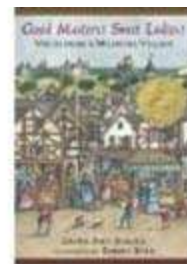


Review of *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!: Voices from a Medieval Village*

Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!: Voices from a Medieval Village
by Laura Schlitz, Robert Byrd, Illustrator

Reviewed by Julie Tomlianovich, Youth Services Consultant, South Central Kansas Library System

There is a boy who throws dung onto the dress of the lord's daughter. There are the glassblower's daughters, one lamenting, the other hopeful about a possible marriage to his apprentice. There is the lord's nephew's hunt for the wild boar and there is the blacksmith's daughter who is able to shoe a horse, but is reluctant to attend the Maying.



They are but a few of the voices from the 2008 Newbery Medal book, *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!: Voices from a Medieval Village*. It is written in monologues and two dialogues. School librarian Laura Amy Schlitz brings to life the dirt, poverty, dislike, brutality, love, kindness, wit and survival of children ages ten to fifteen who live on or near the manor in the year 1255.

Schlitz explains in the Foreword that these “miniature plays,” written for her students to better understand what life was like during Medieval times, provided each student and the character to be a star for three minutes as they told the tale. Each character's voice is true to his station in life. Using spare vocabulary and cadence, Schlitz opens their souls for the reader to experience their needs and desires. Readers will smile and laugh, then be brought to tears as these children struggle to survive in a cruel world of adults.

The illustrations of Robert Byrd evoke the time. Readers will be able to find the characters in the first double page spread that lays out the manor, with its thatched roofs, fields, forest and river. Each monologue is bordered by vertical margins with different patterns and colors that contain the additional snippets of information to explain vocabulary and situations.

History comes alive in this elegant and thoughtful work. A surprising, but excellent, choice for the 2008 Newbery Award.

Schlitz's previous work, *A Drowned Maiden's Hair*, is also a story to be savored if one missed it last year.