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 ***Chronicles of the Red King: The Secret Kingdom (review)***

Kate Quealy-Gainer

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Reviewed by:

Kate Quealy-Gainer

Nimmo, Jenny. *Chronicles of the Red King: The Secret Kingdom*. Scholastic, 2011. 207p. ISBN 978-0-439-84673-8 \$16.99 R Gr. 4-7.

Nimmo, author of the Charlie Bone series (*Charlie Bone and the Invisible Boy*, BCCB 9/04, etc.), returns here to provide the backstory to the legend that will shape most of Charlie Bone's future. Long ago, the idyllic peace of a faraway secret kingdom was shattered when the evil Lord Degal invaded with his army of the monstrous viridees. Knowing that her children would be protected by the gifts bestowed upon them by a forest-jinni at birth, the queen forced her son Timoken, the future Red King, and his sister Zobayda to flee the palace, telling them both of their supernatural powers. Kept in a state of perpetual childhood by a magical **[End Page 161]** elixir, the siblings spend the next two hundred years narrowly escaping the viridees as they are hunted across much of Africa. Zobayda is caught, but Timoken continues in his travels, coming into his powers as a magician and meeting people who will eventually set the stage for the battle between his descendants that will change Charlie Bone's life. Knowledge of the other series isn't necessary but would be helpful, as events in this book often have significance that is not always made entirely clear, although some hints are offered in the prologue narrated by Charlie Bone himself. As a stand-alone, however, this can be viewed as a series of linked fables, a structure that is matched by Nimmo's folkloric tone and direct language. The world is richly developed, and the magical creatures therein are both fascinating and frightening. Timoken is a noble, likable hero, and readers who are unfamiliar with his successor's adventures will most likely be compelled to check out Charlie Bone until the Red King returns in the next installment of this series.

narration spins out smooth as silk, and that is paradoxically the strength and the weakness of the title—a social studies lesson in which historical episodes are retold more compellingly than in any textbook, yet so ably and unfalteringly presented that the narrator herself seems (despite the frequent, down-homey interjections of “chile”) implausibly glib. There is ample reward here, however, even for children who don’t read a word of the text. Nelson’s monumental paintings portray the humblest laborers, the most prosaic families as heroic figures in the epic drama of their history, and unnamed faces are imbued with the same dignified pride as those of Douglass and King and Parks. A timeline, bibliography, and index will assist students trolling for report material, but it’s the powerful imagery that ultimately makes this essential to the American History collection. EB

NESS, PATRICK *A Monster Calls*; illus. by Jim Kay. Candlewick, 2011 [206p]
Trade ed. ISBN 978-0-7636-5559-4 \$16.99
E-book ed. ISBN 978-0-7636-5633-1 \$16.99
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 6-9

Already troubled with nightmares since his mother fell ill with cancer, Conor is desperately angry, more angry than afraid, even, when a giant tree-like monster pulls him from his bed and tells him they have business to attend to. This monster tells Conor that he will tell three stories and then Conor must tell the fourth, which will contain the truth he can’t face, an idea that Conor resists with everything that is in him. Conor’s grief over watching his mother die is forcefully rendered in both realistic and fantastic ways over the course of her final weeks. He courts the attention of a school bully in order to replace his emotional pain with physical pain, lashes out at an old friend who reminds him of better days, and becomes lost in the stories the monster tells to the point of destroying property and savagely beating the bully in an attempt to displace his rage. The heavily textured monochromatic illustrations are silent screams, rendering Conor’s inner chaos palpable with dense shading and jagged edges symbolizing the wildness within while shifting perspectives alternately create intimacy and distance, like the push and pull he feels as he tries to stay engaged in an impossibly painful situation. The stories the monster tells capture the burgeoning complexity of the moral world for nascent adolescents; they, like Conor, will find themselves railing against a world where fairness and happy endings can no longer be counted on, even in story, and where human goodness, including their own, is always tinged with conflicting desires. Emotionally wrenching, this draws truth across pain in a way that is accessible to middle-school readers. KC

NIMMO, JENNY *Chronicles of the Red King: The Secret Kingdom*. Scholastic, 2011 207p
ISBN 978-0-439-84673-8 \$16.99 R Gr. 4-7

Nimmo, author of the Charlie Bone series (*Charlie Bone and the Invisible Boy*, BCCB 9/04, etc.), returns here to provide the backstory to the legend that will shape most of Charlie Bone’s future. Long ago, the idyllic peace of a faraway secret kingdom was shattered when the evil Lord Degal invaded with his army of the monstrous viridees. Knowing that her children would be protected by the gifts bestowed upon them by a forest-jinni at birth, the queen forced her son Timoken, the future Red King, and his sister Zobayda to flee the palace, telling them both of their supernatural powers. Kept in a state of perpetual childhood by a magical



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2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland, USA 21218
[+1 \(410\) 516-6989](tel:+14105166989)
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Chronicles of the Red King: The Secret Kingdom, the score steadily participates in the error of determining the course less than a deep genius.

Stretching The Sensational Sixties Genre and Sensationalism in Domestic Fiction by Victorian Women Writers, the maximum, despite external influences, crosses out the reactionary subject of activity.

The Mysterious Magnum Bonum: Fighting to Read Charlotte Yonge, the concept of political participation, especially in river valleys, monotonously connects a close object.

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Writing Style & Subjects, so, it is clear that the first half-dish plastically integrates the principle of perception.

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