



Bridgman, Rae
Fish & Sphinx (MiddleGate Series)
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In this third novel in the MiddleGate Series, Rae Bridgman once again takes the reader on a wild ride through an imaginary world based in Winnipeg. This time, Sophie and Wil uncover a secret plot by the evil magical society of the Serpent's Chain to capture the Palace of the Blazing Star. In the real world, the palace is the Manitoba Legislative Building – a building “at the centre of the world.” (p.113) In their search for a solution to the crisis, the children meet the mysterious Catfysh, decode strange messages and bring stone statues to life! Winnipeg remains safe for humanity because of the actions of brave Sophie and Wil.

Rae Bridgman uses her background in Latin and anthropology to populate the pages of her fantasy adventure. Each chapter begins with a Latin phrase or anecdote. There are also interesting and unusual pen and ink drawings in the novel which add an air of mystery to the text. Many of the drawings relate to the title ***Fish & Sphinx***. The drawings help readers to visualize some of the unusual characters and images in the novel.

Sophie and Wil once again search for answers to the endless questions that plague them. Since both sets of their parents have either died or disappeared mysteriously, they are both seeking to find answers. Although the two are living with the rather strange Aunts Rue and Violet, they have a lot of freedom to roam around the city to investigate clues. Aunt

Violet is starting a fortune-telling shop, and Aunt Rue is applying to become an Assistant Deputy Minister. Even though the two children are exploring the supernatural and trying to save the world, they are also just ordinary children – worrying about school projects, trying to fit in with friends, and going to Valentine's Day parties!

This novel, with its Academy for the Magical Arts and strange supernatural events, is reminiscent of the Harry Potter novels. On the other hand, the fantasy elements and the secret codes remind readers of the Narnia series. References to Greek, Egyptian and Roman mythology also abound in this novel. Always in the background is the strange secret society of the Serpent's Chain. What does the society want? Why does Wil have a strange medallion? What will they be up to next? What kind of creature is Catfysh? Why can she transform herself from a woman into a fish? How does this happen? What will happen in the next novel in the series? Young readers interested in fantasy, mystery and mythology will enjoy this novel.

Thematic Links: Fantasy; Magic; Egyptian/Greek/Roman Mythology; Manitoba History; Mystery; Codes; Riddles; Snakes

- Myra Junyk
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