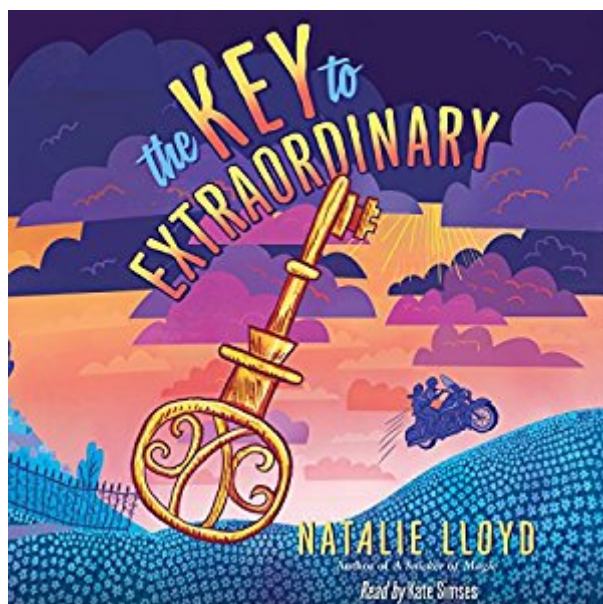


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The Key To Extraordinary



Synopsis

The highly anticipated new standalone novel from rising star Natalie Lloyd! There's a lot Emma wants to tell her mother about: her job leading cemetery walking tours, her new drum set, and the fact that the town's most famous ghost, the Morning Glory, seems to be trying to send Emma a message. But Emma can't share any of this, because Emma's mom is dead. Luckily there's a loophole. The women in Emma's family all have a special destiny that comes to them in the form of a dream, and when they finally achieve this destiny, they're rewarded with a vision of all their extraordinary ancestors. Emma has spent her whole life waiting to discover her destiny and maybe see her mom again, even if just for a moment. But the dream never comes.... Just when she's about to give up, she learns that the Morning Glory is sending her messages, hints about a secret in Emma's family that could change everything. But can she solve the mystery in time to prove her destiny...and say a final farewell to the mother who was taken from her too soon?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My 12 year old daughter devoured this book. These are her thoughts. "The story gives a strong example of family love through several generations. In the book, a girl fulfills her destiny, which she found in a dream, to save a place her family loves. The town had a community that really cared for each other, and they also showed a special respect for the dead in the graveyard. The book was well-written and kept my attention all the way through." She is pleased to discover that the author, Natalie Lloyd, wrote a previous book, "A Snicker of Magic," which we will certainly purchase. Great story!

Since the day I read *A Snicker of Magic* by Natalie Lloyd, I knew I would pre-order any other book she would publish. Some writers help you visualize, Natalie makes you feel! She creates characters that you want to befriend (or adopt!) Her writing is almost lyrical. I find myself rereading lines to taste them tripping across my tongue! Some may call it folksy, I find it charming. This book was just as beautiful and just as compelling. When I came home from school last night and saw this book sitting on the kitchen counter, I ripped it open and dove right in. Part of me wanted to slow down and savor it, but I just couldn't. As I got into it, I was compelled to see what Emma's Destiny Dream was, and how it was going to be realized. I wanted to see if the mysterious boy would ever speak again. I had to know if they could save their family bakery, the Boneyard Cafe. I was curious if the ghosts in their backyard cemetery were real. I needed to know what the key in her dream unlocked! I couldn't put this book down! If you love stories with multi-generational families, compassionate characters, traditions, and eccentricity, I think you will love it, too! *The Key to Extraordinary* is extraordinary. It will satiate a hunger you didn't even know you had!

In *The Key to Extraordinary*, young Emma has recently lost her mother but lives with her grandmother and uncles in a house near the local cemetery. It's one of the oldest cemeteries in the country and Emma's family has long ties to the place. Emma volunteers on weekends, leading tours and encouraging people to explore and appreciate its unusual aspects. But the cemetery's charms and quirkiness doesn't stop at its gates -- Emma's family also runs a famous bakery across from the cemetery and people from all over come to sample their "Brew" of hot chocolate and their near magical muffins. The women in the family are visited with special dreams (Destiny Dreams) that predict/foreshadow the accomplishments that follow. Before Emma's mother passed away, she told Emma that she thought Emma's dream would come early. So, Emma waits every evening in the hope that she'll have her Destiny Dream and that she'll be able to fulfill its promise when it comes. Emma's Destiny Dream seems to hint at her finding a legendary treasure in time to save their family's land -- at least she thinks and hopes so. Emma faces all sorts of pressure and obstacles as she embarks on her quest. Natalie Lloyd tells the story with whimsy, humor and great skill. I loved *The Key to Extraordinary*!

Thinking back over *The Key to Extraordinary* feels a bit like remembering a childhood summer or a vivid but rapidly fading dream: distant and slightly bittersweet. Although the existence of Emma's magical Tennessee seems farfetched, it never seems forced. Natalie Lloyd does a great job of showing rather than merely telling, of sparing us unnecessary detail, and of avoiding bumbling

awkwardness. Although there are lots of sad aspects of the book and plenty of happy ones, the observation that struck me most was one that I don't remember Emma herself ever making: that the blue flowers described in the story could have been of great use to her before her voice even took up the tale. There are messages here about finding joy in times of sorrow and about destiny leading us in unexpected directions. I found the book to be wholly original and appropriate for the recommended age range (8-12), even if younger readers may not grasp all of it at once.

The target readership for this book is middle graders, and it is right on point. There is enough of a supernatural element to appeal without any dark overtones, in spite of a locale next to a cemetery. The characters are challenged with sorrow, physical handicaps, economic woes and the cares of us all, but these are surmountable. Children of any age--not to mention the rest of us--are feeling their way to find their place in their circles, both family and community, and this story deals with that issue realistically, and ultimately with triumph. The people are likable: the good guys are good guys, and the bad guys are not deviant. I do not hesitate to offer this book to anybody who reads well enough to either read it for oneself, or as a readaloud, down to age eight.

4.5 stars My grandson, 10, and I both read this book. My grandson loves science fiction and dark mysteries, but he did seem to enjoy this book. He thought there was too much mushy stuff, but other than that he understood it was about the good and the bad times in life. Neither of us has read any of Natalie Lloyd's books. She is a master in writing, and was able to keep our attention throughout the book. Emma Pearl Casey lives with her grandmother and her brother, Topher, in a small town in Tennessee. Grandmother runs a cafe, the Boneyard cafe, named such because it is next to an old cemetery. The Cafe is not doing well, and a malicious developer wants to purchase the Cafe. However, Emma has heard through age old stories that there is a treasure in the cemetery, and if she can find it all will be well. Like life, there are always ups and downs, joys and sadness, but Emily comes from a can do family, and never do they give up. Many lessons are learned in this book, some of the storyline went on too long for me, but all in all, the story was well received. Recommended. prisrob 11-08-15

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