

I Capture the Castle

Review by Lauren W., age 17, Mensa in Georgia

Dodie Smith's novel *I Capture the Castle* is a journey through the mind of a young writer as she attempts to chronicle her daily life. Seventeen-year-old Cassandra Mortmain has recently learned to speed-write, and she decides to work on her writing skills by describing the actions and conversations of those around her.

Cassandra lives in a fourteenth-century English castle with an interesting cast of characters: her beautiful older sister, Rose; her rather unsociable author father and his second wife, artist-model Topaz; Stephen, the garden boy; a cat and a bull terrier; and sometimes her brother Thomas when he is home from school. One fateful day they make the acquaintance of the Cotton family, including the two sons, and a web of tangled relationships ensues.

While I definitely recommend this book to other readers, I would recommend it to older teenagers, mainly because it will resonate better with them. The writing is tame enough that younger teens could also read it, but most of the characters are adults or on the verge of adulthood. Older readers would take the most from it since they can not only relate, but they may also better pick up on and appreciate Cassandra's sometimes subtle humor.

Over the course of the novel, Cassandra undergoes a definite transformation from child to mature young adult, even though it's only over the course of several months. I love that I could see into her mindset and read exactly what she was feeling when she thought out situations. Her thoughts flowed well and moved the book along very quickly.

Cassandra's narrative voice is wonderful. She is serious at times, but also very witty, which makes for an engaging read. It feels absolutely real, as though I'm reading someone's actual journal. Sometimes I forget that I am reading a story and not a real-life account. Her emotions and the dialogue are so genuine, and they are spot-on for a seventeen-year-old girl in her situation.

Cassandra has many wonderful insights on life, on topics ranging from writing to faith to matters of the heart. I personally have had some of the same thoughts as Cassandra, except Ms. Smith was able to put them into words.

Capture the Castle should be essential reading for aspiring writers, those looking for historical fiction or romance, or anyone who loves reading amazing classic books. Dodie Smith is an exceptional writer, and *I Capture the Castle* is a book that will never become obsolete.