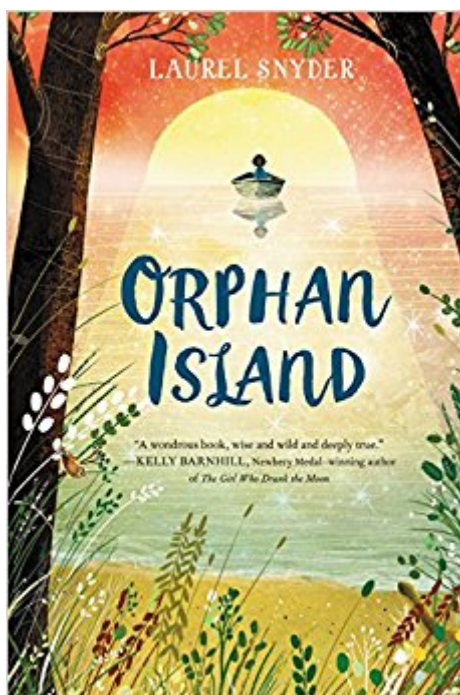


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# Orphan Island



## Synopsis

"A wondrous book, wise and wild and deeply true." — Kelly Barnhill, Newbery Medal-winning author of *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* For readers who loved Sara Pennypacker's *Pax* and Lois Lowry's *The Giver* comes a deep, compelling, heartbreaking, and completely one-of-a-kind novel about nine children who live on a mysterious island. On the island, everything is perfect. The sun rises in a sky filled with dancing shapes; the wind, water, and trees shelter and protect those who live there; when the nine children go to sleep in their cabins, it is with full stomachs and joy in their hearts. And only one thing ever changes: on that day, each year, when a boat appears from the mist upon the ocean carrying one young child to join them and taking the eldest one away, never to be seen again. Today, *Changing* is no different. The boat arrives, taking away Jinny's best friend, Deen, replacing him with a new little girl named Ess, and leaving Jinny as the new Elder. Jinny knows her responsibility now to teach Ess everything she needs to know about the island, to keep things as they've always been. But will she be ready for the inevitable day when the boat will come back and take her away forever from the only home she's known?

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 650 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: Walden Pond Press (May 30, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0062443410

ISBN-13: 978-0062443410

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 47 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #5,477 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #22 in Books > Children's Books

> Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Orphans & Foster Homes #214 in Books >

Children's Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy & Magic

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

— | — "Through the precocious Jinny, Snyder delivers a contemplative commentary on

the transition from childhood to adolescence, and from ignorance to awareness. (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) “Laurel Snyder has written a story that curls around the heart and pulls in tight—a meditation on the power and wisdom and closeness and sorrow of childhood. A wondrous book, wise and wild and deeply true. I loved every second of it. (Kelly Barnhill, Newbery Medal-winning author of *The Girl Who Drank the Moon*) “An elegant and thoughtful meditation on the joys and sorrows of growing up, with lyrical prose, characters that feel as alive as your dearest friends, and a vivid setting sure to enchant young readers. A work of extraordinary heart. (Claire Legrand, author of *Some Kind of Happiness*) “A visionary, poignant, astonishingly lovely fable of childhood and change. This is a book to lose yourself in, and to never forget. (Anne Ursu, author of *The Real Boy*) “Orphan Island is a masterpiece—both timeless and immediate. Snyder’s book, like the island within it, contains all of the joys, wonders, and terrors of childhood. Every young reader needs this book; every grown reader needs it even more. (Jonathan Auxier, New York Times bestselling author of *The Night Gardener*)

Laurel Snyder is a poet, essayist, and author of picture books and novels for children, including *Orphan Island*, *The Longest Night*, *Bigger than a Bread Box*, and *Seven Stories Up*. She is also the editor of the nonfiction anthology *Half/Life: Jew-ish Tales from Interfaith Homes*, a graduate of the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, and a commentator for NPR’s *All Things Considered*. She lives in Atlanta with her family and can be found online at [www.laurelsnyder.com](http://www.laurelsnyder.com).

I really enjoyed the book, however, it left a lot of unanswered questions, I’m hoping there will be a sequel so we can find out why, and what happens next.

This story spoke to me on multiple levels: 1.) At its outermost superficial story level, the plot interested me from the start. The strange and solemn custom of saying goodbye -- possibly forever -- to the eldest of the islanders provided a gripping, emotional scene. 2.) Just underneath the story arc, the character arc was convincing. Seeing nine children, each at a different point in his or her growth arc, provided a good sense of how quickly children grow, how quickly they change and adapt when put in extenuating circumstances. The fact that they also had varying personalities made them leap from the page, spiced up their interactions immensely. I also liked hearing about characters from the past, how previous islanders like Abby would try to send messages to the future. It was both primitive and resourceful at the same time, which made the mysteries that much

more intriguing and page-turning.3.) A layer deeper, the concept of mentoring the young -- almost parenthood-like -- shone through the story in how Jinny must manage Ess and then Loo. It spoke to the difficulties of parenthood, how much is unforeseen, how exhausting and rewarding it can be all at once. The way Ess reacted to Loo, bonded with Sam, and other interactions seemed realistic for siblings that must cope with a parent's divided attention. It would have been nice to see how Deen interacted with Sam, but Jinny's journey definitely echoed some of the difficulties new parents often express.4.) The cycle of life -- how the old must leave and make way for the new, how the young must learn to leave the nest and find new friends when they outgrow their parents. The endless march of time. A lot of themes grew naturally from the premise of following rules, becoming self-sufficient and independent, learning on the fly, needing to bond with others of different ages and social ranks. I liked how Laurel Snyder was able to accomplish these relationships without resorting to bloodshed or fisticuffs (a la Lord of the Flies).5.) The event-based structure of the chapters kept the pages turning. Every day seemed to present some new, imaginative challenge, each believable and self-contained, such as hunting for honey, reading books, venturing onto the cliffs, or catching an inkfish. Kudos to the author for coming up with believable characters and creatures, from the inkfish providing ink for writing and making references to famous books such as Harry Potter and James and the Giant Peach without directly mentioning them by name. Very well done!6.) Signs -- I liked how every sign could be interpreted or not interpreted, inviting the reader (along with Jinny) to make too much of some of the book's later events. For example, when the kids experience snow for the first time, we as readers almost want to see it as "the sky falling" like the nursery rhyme, but Jinny and Nat do a good job of noting that it's only a sign if you read it that way. In that sense, anything after Jinny's refusal to leave the island could be both a sign or a normal occurrence, and that duality - the possibility of multiple readings - lent both insight and intrigue to the story's second half. In that sense, the book seemed both realistic -- something that nature could conceivably throw at the orphans -- and fantastic, in that unseen forces are trying to push for Jinny's departure. The main negatives that disrupted the reading were a strange baby-like language that Ess used, Loo's inhumane behavior tearing apart a sea star, and Jinny's incessant internal dialogue obsessing over Deen. It would have been nice if Ess didn't talk like such a baby (she's not that far removed from the elders, who speak normally), or if the author didn't constantly refer to Loo like a wild animal. Sometimes, it felt as if the story were being told from the viewpoint of a middle-aged mother, at least in how much surprise was interjected into describing Loo's child-like energy. Also, I wanted to look up to Jinny for her challenges raising Ess and fighting her own desire to stay, but her constant daydreaming of days past with Deen clouded the narrative and gave the story an unnecessarily

wistful romantic feel.

"Somewhere out there, beyond the boat, was more." Orphan Island is sure to enchant readers young & old and leave them wanting more. The story telling in this novel is pure perfection. From the magical island to the complex characters - this book has a lot to offer. Much like LOST, readers will be pulled into this surreal world & begin asking questions about everything (and everyone). I was captivated from the first bell toll to the last page - my only wish is that there were more answers. Laurel Snyder does a great job of building a world that is both believable & imaginative. I can't wait to discuss & share with kids! On my #MockNewbery list for 2018. Grades 4+.

This is possibly my new favorite book in children's literature. I got this book to read as a possibility for my mock newbery club with my students and I absolutely fell in love with it. To start, the cover art is gorgeous. This is a fantasy story about 9 orphans of all ages (the ages are never specified, but we know they're a year apart) who live on an island together. The story paints a beautiful picture of their lives growing up together and it very sweetly depicts a coming of age story for the oldest girl on the island. I can't wait to share this story with my students!

...you will love this. This is the type of book that I love more and more as I sit and think about it or talk about it with others. There are so many layers to the story and the symbolism is amazing!

I need to talk to people about this book! There are so many unanswered questions. It is frustrating to ponder them alone but fascinating to talk about them with other readers.

The book was great! Story was really different and interesting to read. When you're done, you want to know more about the Island and the kids. It's very similar to The Giver if you liked that book. My only complaint is that my copy, which I bought new, had some mysterious stain on one page.

My 11 year old and I are reading it together, and we both love it. Beautifully written and a page turner.

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