



Pablo and Birdy

Alison McGhee

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A boy who drifted into the seaside town of Isla as a baby searches for answers about where he and his parrot came from in this charmer of a tale laced with magical realism from New York Times bestselling author Alison McGhee.

The seaside town of Isla has many stories, the most notable being the legend of the Seafaring Parrot. Locals claim that the Seafarer remembers every sound, every whisper, cry, laugh, or snort ever uttered. But, though there have been rumored Seafarer sightings, no one has actually seen the bird before. Other stories surround a boy named Pablo, who had washed up on shore in a blow-up swimming pool as an infant with only a lavender parrot as a companion. Now, on the eve of his tenth birthday, the stories are repeated.

“At first I thought it was a huge fish,” Emmanuel, the man who found and took Pablo in, says. Pierre, the baker’s guess was a good one: Perhaps Pablo has come from an undiscovered country, one unknown to the rest of the world. Maybe the inhabitants there lived in tree houses, or underground. Or maybe he’s a pirate baby. But Pablo wants the truth, and the only one who might know it is Birdy, his parrot. After all, she was there, holding onto the raft. But unlike most birds who live in Isla, Birdy can neither talk or fly. Or, at least, she never has. Until...one day, when strong winds begin to blow—winds similar to the ones that brought Pablo to shore—Birdy begins to mutter. Could Birdy be a Seafaring parrot? If she is, then she will be able to tell Pablo the true story of where he came from—of who tied him so lovingly and safely to that raft? But, if she is, that also means the second part of the Seafarer myth is true...that Seafaring Parrots will, eventually, fly away.

As Pablo is buzzing with questions, hopes, and fears, an old saying echoes in his mind: winds of change mean fortune lost or fortune gained. And while the winds rise in Isla, Pablo holds tight to Birdy. Would losing his companion, his dearest link to his past, be that loss?

Pablo and Birdy Details

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Author : Alison McGhee

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From Reader Review Pablo and Birdy for online ebook

Laura says

I love Pablo and Birdy and all the lively wonder fully imagined characters of Isla. I want everyone I know of all ages to read this book. Bravo. dear Alison.

Andréa says

Note: I accessed a digital review copy of this book through Edelweiss.

Rummanah (Books in the Spotlight) says

I loved Pablo and Birdy's relationship. Review coming soon.

Stephanie Tournas says

Set on a fictional island in a warm climate, this atmospheric and charming novel is about the meaning of family. Pablo and his bird, Birdy, washed up on the shores of Isla when he was just a baby. As he approaches his tenth birthday, Pablo feels that his friends don't appreciate how hard it is to have no knowledge of his origins. Even though he is surrounded by loving adults, Pablo yearns for connection to his past. The only one who knows is Birdy, a parrot, and Birdy is unable to tell him. Tension builds as news of the strange winds that blew when Pablo came to Isla are forecast to come again, and with it, news of the mysterious Seafaring Parrots. Eccentric characters, including a committee of birds, who seem like a Greek chorus, and a starving dog that seems to have a connection with Birdy, make this gentle character-centered story a lovely read. The fact of Pablo arriving as a refugee from unknown shores is an echo of news headlines about migration. Whimsical black and white pencil drawings affectionately flesh out the cast of characters.

Jennifer says

Even though I felt like I knew where the story was headed, I enjoyed this charming tale about a boy and the bird who watched out for him.

Amy says

10 years ago, Pablo washed up on the shores of Isla, in a small pool, with a lavender feathered parrot named Birdy. Now searching for answers, Pablo is determined to discover who he is and where he's from. But as the winds begin to change, as they did ten years ago, Pablo starts to feel that things are shifting; when Birdie

begins to mutter and try to fly. With the old fisherman saying echoing in his mind, “ The winds of change mean fortune lost or fortune gained,” Pablo sets off to discover the truth.

Maybe the myth of the seafaring parrots is actually true, or maybe it’s time for the winds to blow in the truth, but no matter what this is the year Pablo is going to get his answers.

In this charming and captivating story, Pablo and Birdy explores the amazing relationship of a boy and his bird struggling to find their place in the world. Allison McGhee highlights a bond like none other, while also preparing for the winds of change. Unique and beautiful, this story pulls you in from the very first line, while also being easy to follow along for younger readers. Black and white illustrations only add to the richness of the story, while keeping younger readers submerged in the storyline.

You can find the rest of my reviews and giveaways in my weekly newspaper column: For the Love of Books-Dixon's Independent Voice (less)

Hoover Public Library Kids and Teens says

We are all susceptible to the winds of change.

Sandy Brehl says

Disclaimer: I'm a bird-nut, so this fits me like a glove. Anyone who uses the expression "birdbrain" in a derogatory way does NOT know birds.

Beyond that, this is such a charming story, loaded with distinctive and appealing characters in a setting rarely described, with relationships that are unique and yet feel warmly familiar at their core.

The magical/fantasy/legendary portions of the story are well done and may entice some readers of that genre to read a story firmly anchored in reality.

** Could be a welcome way for displaced readers to find themselves in a story that mildly parallels their own journeys while offering entertainment and escape.

Natalie Sapkarov Harvey says

Full of heart. Made me feel all the things. Slow to get started but finished strong.

FYI, for those who can't stand to read anything with the slightest hint of animal cruelty, there are a few pages of a dog remembering his not-so-nice owner. But that's not the focus of the story.

Lovely. Pablo and Birdy will stay with me for awhile, I think.

Meredith Burton says

Pablo and Birdy was such a heartwarming read! I loved how the Island of Isla served as a sanctuary for those fleeing from danger, (humans or animals alike). The quiet narrative has some poignant moments, (I loved the

pastry-stealing dog!) There is also moments of delightful humor, (the Committee made up of parrots was adorable). Best of all, this story is a depiction of a quest: the quest of a young boy trying to discover where he truly belongs and of the parrot who never leaves his side. Could Birdy be a legendary Seafarer, one of the birds with the extraordinary ability to remember every sound ever heard? Could the Winds of Change portend the loss or gain of fortune? As a sinister plan unfolds and the relentless quest to find a Seafarer and place it in captivity draws nearer to the island, Pablo must decide how to help his greatest companion and nurturer.

The small-town atmosphere, colorful characters and elements of sacrifice and familial love is so very moving. It's been a while since I've read such a cozy uplifter of a story. It was truly inspirational and amazing! Isla is a place I would definitely love to visit. I would love to see this book win a Newbery or at least a Newbery Honor. Pablo and Birdy is one of my favorite reads this year. God bless you all.

Lonna Pierce says

Nothing has touched my heart as deeply in a long time as Pablo & Birdy. Nearly perfect in its craft, characters, and story, it resonates with me on so many levels. Ten years ago, Pablo washed up on the shores of Isla as a baby, in a child's inflatable pool, crisscrossed with twine, and a necklace of "Dios me bendiga." Accompanied by a parrot who can neither speak nor fly, Birdy will not leave Pablo's side. Emmanuel took him in and raised Pablo as family in the little tourist town, along with Pierre the baker and Lula, the henna tattoo artist. But when the winds of change return after 10 years, so do the legends of a Seafaring Parrot who can reproduce all the sounds ever heard, and the promises of fortune lost and fortune gained. Pablo learns of this mother's love and discovers he is not the only one who has left the deprivations of his former home, hungry for a better life. This is the larger story of immigrants coming to America, finding one's true identity, and of the enduring power of love. It has my strong recommendation as a must-read, and my vote for any and all awards, including the elusive Newbery.

Cat says

Loved this story! So sweet! All the characters were wonderful. The setting was magical, the whole story was magical, actually! I'm thinking 3rd grade up will enjoy this tale of two friends with pretty amazing beginnings. Alison McGhee's book is sure to be a winner!

Tonja Drecker says

A heart-warming tale about the bonds of friendship, pains of the past and the hope, which a change in the winds might bring.

After a large storm, Pablo was found washed up on the shores of an island, bound inside a child's swimming pool with Birdy, a parrot, as his loyal guard. As Pablo is left with a fear of the sea and storms, Birdy carries his own scars and refuses to talk or fly. Ten years have past, and Pablo and Birdy have become an integral part of the small town, where the story of a never-seen Seafaring Parrot which can fly impossible distances over the ocean and hears/speaks every noise ever made, draws in tourists by the troves. When the 'winds of change' come with an approaching storm, a news woman and her team of scientists set out to be the first to

find and capture this mysterious bird. Since no one even knows if this bird exists, this doesn't seem to be a problem. But then, Birdy speaks and it's in a voice Pablo only holds in his deepest memories--the voice of his own mother.

The setting alone comes to life like a masterpiece. The small, island town over-flows with a vibrant but simple life. The details dribble in allowing the smell of the bakery or taste of the breeze to settle in on every page. But it's the characters which really add the zest. There are only about half a dozen human ones and a few birds, but each one has an unforgettable personality. They don't always get along or agree, but this is a town where everyone sticks together and does the best they can. It's a true home with a sense of safety, which makes it hard not to love the town and the people.

Pablo has a sad, secret past, and this hangs as a gentle, longing pain in the background. He's full of life and clings to his best friend Birdy with so much love that it's hard not to want to hug both of them. Behind Pablo's light-heart mask, he holds a ton of questions and a bitter sadness, which he only shares with Birdy. And Birdy loves him back. It's an inspiring relationship, which touches the heart.

The story flows at a very steady pace and never leaves a dull moment. Pablo's concerns carry layers of mystery, ones which demand to be discovered. The serious moments are spiced up with the quirky band of Parrots, who despite their slim parrot vocabulary, make their thoughts more than known and ensure several giggles. Even the townspeople add a perfect sense of humor as their rich and humorous personalities clash, and bring out the funnier side of working over differences and living together. The added chapters of a stray dog and his own difficult past--but as an amazing desire for the bakeries elephant ears--are like a cherry on top of an emotional sundae.

As a special treat, there are wonderful illustrations sprinkled between the pages. These pencil drawings add a lovely glimpse at the characters and scenes, and appear at all the right times. But then, I'm always a huge fan of illustrations, especially in middle grade fiction.

Above all things, this is a story with heart. Mountains of it. Pablo and Birdy are impossible not to love, and the townspeople are natural neighbors, which one wishes they could have. Pablo's search for answers, his attempts to save Birdy and the ache of discovering the truth make this an unforgettable tale. Add the flavor of a South American island, and it's a book kids ages 8 to 12 (and even older readers) are sure to enjoy.

I received a complimentary copy and found this one so terrific that I wanted to share my honest thoughts.

Kim McGee says

Pablo is turning ten on the tiny island of Isla - that in and of itself is not a big deal except that Pablo and his beautiful bright parrot mysteriously showed up on the island's shore in a swimming pool when he was an infant. Birdy, his parrot, has never flown nor has she talked the way the other parrots do on the island. Her unusual markings have gotten the attention of some who think she might be a rare seafaring parrot and scientists are on the hunt for her so they can lock her up to study her. Pablo must find a way to save Birdy and also try to understand how she is trying to tell him what she knows of his history. She does communicate in her own way and gives him the love and courage to accept change. Friends are found in all places and come in all shapes and sizes - just like family. Sweet story that will appeal to animal lovers or anyone who is longs to dig their toes in the sand and feel the sea breeze in their hair (or feathers).

Laura Harrison says

Incredibly moving, creative story. One of my favorites for a 2018 Newbery.
