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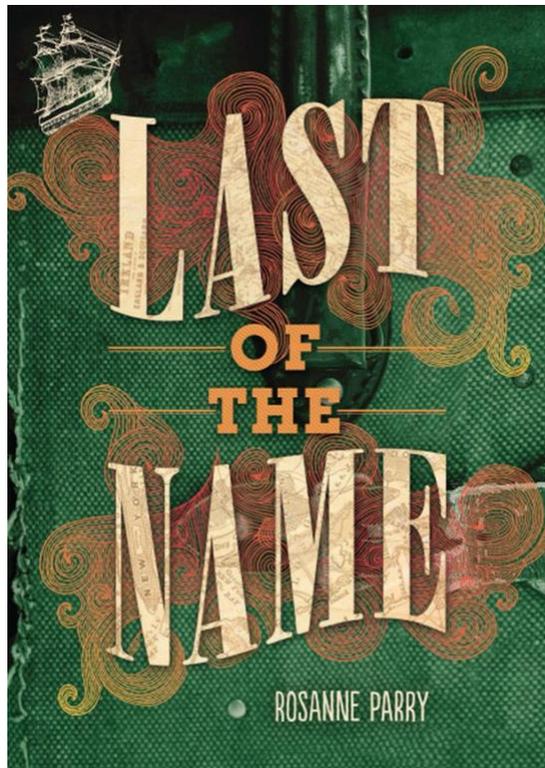
Review of *Last of the Name*

Written by Rosanne Parry

Adult/Educator Reviewer: Chloe Grimes

The University of Georgia, Athens, GA

Student Reviewers: Megan Serfontein, 9th Grade



Perry, R. (2019). *Last of the name*. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books.

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Adult Review: Chloe Grimes

It is 1963 and 12-year-old Danny O'Carolan leaves his home in Ireland for the hope of a brighter future in New York City. He is accompanied by his older sister, Kathleen. They are all each other has left in the world, and the overprotective sister refuses to leave her brother's side. Therefore, when she finds a job as a domestic servant, she offers up the services of her younger "sister" as well. Reluctantly, Danny decides pretending to be a girl is a better alternative to a workhouse, or worse, the battlefield. When he is not at work, Danny is obsessed with exploring his new home and the many types of people that call the city home as well. He sees German, Irish, and Italian immigrants fighting for the same jobs as the free Black people. All of them are poor and hungry. To cope with the struggles of his life, Danny uses the music of his people to find comfort. With the draft looming, tensions continue to grow in the city. Danny, with the help of Kathleen, must find a way to keep the O'Carolan name alive.

This book would fit well into the hands of a student in the early years of middle school, ages 11-13. Readers are truly thrown into Civil War era New York City. Perry allows readers to smell and feel exactly what Danny and Kathleen are experiencing. Speaking of Danny, his honest and charming narration is the strongest selling point for this text. It is nice to see a male protagonist who allows readers to get a glimpse into the emotions hiding behind the surface of his actions.

It is a beautifully done piece of historical fiction that effortlessly blends a heartwarming narrative with an otherwise untold perspective in history. The Civil War is so commonly taught only from the North versus the South perspective. However, often times those perspectives do not fully resonate with students. This text explores the War through the lens of immigration. Additionally, the text will be able to spark discussion comparing and contrasting changes in the immigration process to what we see happening in

today's society. While the majority of this story will keep readers turning the pages, stretches of the middle veer off track from the main storyline. Educators should be aware of this because it may cause readers to lose interest, especially considering the overall length of the text.

This text handles mature conversations in a surface level nature. Students in 7th and 8th grade may crave a text that allows them to explore a deeper conversation than the ones provided here. However, as a teacher, I would feel perfectly comfortable putting this text in the hands of a late elementary schooler. Also, while the majority of this story will keep readers turning the pages, stretches of the middle veer off track from the main storyline. Educators should consider because it may cause readers to lose interest- especially considering the overall length of the text.

Overall, I would recommend this book to middle schoolers because it is an accessible entry into the world of historical fiction. Danny and Kathleen's story weaves together turmoil and fear alongside the ever popular "boy dressed a girl" trope to create a lovely example of the power of a sibling bond.

Student Review: Megan Serfontein

Last of the Name by Rosanne Perry is an enjoyable and quick read that keeps the audience enthralled to the last page. The writing style is beautiful yet easy to understand and very clearly well thought out. The excellent and enticing plot development and expertly established characters will keep readers coming back to it. *Last of the Name* follows 12-year-old Danny

O'Carolan and his older sister Kathleen as Irish immigrants in New York City in the mid 1800's. Kathleen and Danny have lost everyone dearest to

them except for each other. The only way for the siblings to stay together and for Danny not to be pulled into the Civil War is for Kathleen and her “younger sister” to get work as domestic services. Despite his complaining Danny will do anything for his sister and goes along with the plan.

The reason this book touched me so deeply was because it felt so real. Rosanne Perry uses such descriptive and transporting language that you cannot help but feel so deeply for Danny and Kathleen. You fall in love with Kathleen’s quick tongue and strong backbone and Danny’s sweet nature and younger sibling qualities. In spite of every tragic but historically accurate thing the O’Carolan siblings face the story truly has such hope and beauty in every page.

The only slight problem I found with the story was that it starts a little slowly which may make readers

turn away but it truly turns out amazing. I would highly recommend any of my friends and family read this book. It is truly great for people who enjoy historical fiction that is as thrilling as it is true of the time and place. The truth of it all also makes it great for people who are seeking to learn more about Irish immigrants who would also enjoy this read because despite being fiction it is still very truthful of the hardships of immigrants, particularly Irish immigrants.

Overall it is a great read and would be wonderful for anyone looking for an engaging and touching story. From the characters to plot, *Last of the Name* is a beautiful, poignant, and well written book that will ensnare anyone who has the pleasure to read.