

November Children's Book of the Month reviewed by Myra Chapman, 4th-6th teacher.

Fablehaven by Brandon Mull

Have you ever wondered if the mythical and magical beings from ancient stories could be real? In *Fablehaven*, the first book in a series by Brandon Mull, witches, fairies and satyrs are just a few of the cast of characters that inhabit a preserve for mystical creatures. Prior to discovering this preserve, 11-year-old Seth and his 13-year-old sister Kendra never would have dreamed such creatures existed. It is only when their parents head off on a grownups only cruise, and they are sent to stay with their peculiar Grandpa and Grandma Sorenson, who the children barely know, that the children discover there is magic all around them.

Even before they reach their grandparents' estate in Connecticut, the children are already suspecting that it is going to be a very long seventeen days. Upon seeing the *No Trespassing* signs along the driveway and the final warning of *Certain Death Awaits*, Kendra and Seth are sure they won't survive their stay. When they arrive, they discover that their grandmother has suddenly gone to care for a friend, leaving them with just their grandfather and Lena, grandpa's housekeeper, and Dale, the gardener. Grandpa's house is full of rules, such as never going into the woods or the barn, which he claims is for the children's safety.

Seth, the more impetuous and daring of the two, is much too tempted to sit around the house all day and he decides to go exploring. With his adventure kit in hand, he heads down a path into the forbidden forest. Seth can't see anything wrong with the woods and can't understand why Grandpa would consider them so dangerous. Meanwhile, Kendra follows the rules by sticking close to the house. Kendra marvels at the beautiful gardens and is amazed at the astounding number of butterflies and other insects that frequent the flowers. She and Seth soon come to realize that things are not always as they appear.

Grandpa's rules aren't just about steering clear of ticks or dangerous farm equipment; the estate is home to a host of other wonders and dangers. As Grandpa Sorenson slowly reveals the secrets of his home, the children begin to understand the gentle balance that keeps everything in order. Despite Grandpa's careful efforts, sinister magic soon wreaks havoc on the preserve and forces the children to make a decision that could have devastating results.

The book has a delightful mixture of humor and adventure that is sure to captivate audiences who enjoy fantasy rooted in reality. I would recommend this book for readers aged nine and up, and as a read aloud, during which parents and children can laugh at the ridiculous consequences of magic and share in the nail biting suspense.

Come to the Village School Open House this Saturday Nov. 4, from 10 to noon, and visit the 4th-6th classroom to discover more great books that everyone in your family will want to read. The 4th-6th grade teachers are happy to tailor their suggestions for individual readers. Some of these books are still hot off the presses!