

Book Review: Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*

by Judy Clement Wall



Reading *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, by Brian Selznick, I was reminded of Nick Bantock's *Griffin & Sabine*. It's not that the two books are alike, really - their stories are completely different and the artwork is not at all similar - but I had the same feeling as I read each book: that they were not quite like anything I'd experienced before.

Hugo tells the story of an orphan boy, Hugo Cabret, who lives a secret life in the walls of a Paris train station. When he is caught stealing trinkets from the old man who runs the toy booth in the station, a mystery unfolds. Somehow they are connected - Hugo and the toy seller, Hugo's dead father and the strange girl who hangs around the toy booth. The answer lies in the secrets that each character keeps, in the pages of an old notebook, the shape of a stolen key, the message locked away in the "brain" of a mechanical man.

I loved this book for its fantasy, its sense of adventure and mystery, the way that I had to make myself go slowly, resisting a childlike urge to see the end. The illustrations are beautiful, black and white drawings that absolutely capture a child's perspective of the world as a large and foreboding place. While the book is geared for children (with more than enough to engage adults), I think it might be too dark for children under Age 8 or so. (If your child is under 8, get the book, read it yourself and save it - you can't have too many good books!)