



The Borning Room

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Mothers give birth in the borning room. The dying take their departure there. Outside the Lott family's Ohio farmhouse, the Civil War rages, slavery falls, and the world marvels at the wonder of electricity. Inside, within the walls of the borning room, Georgina Lott will experience her life's greatest turnings. Across the years, she discovers womanhood and first love, experiences the mourning that comes with loss, and, as did her mother and grandmother, at last takes her place in the room as another precious life is about to begin.

The Borning Room Details

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From Reader Review The Borning Room for online ebook

Mary says

Reread this for my 2017 book challenge. It wasn't as wonderful as I remembered, but it's still a sweet read.

Kristen says

I needed a book to read last night while I was waiting for my slow-moving fourteen year old to get out of the shower and let me have my turn. This was on the shelf, so I grabbed it. I read half of it then and the rest when I got home from work today. Despite the gentleness and pastoral nature of the story, it was a page-turner. I wasn't sure whether to classify it as YA or juvenile, but since it was a discard from a high school library, I went with YA.

This series of vignettes follows a girl named Georgina in 19th century Ohio through the stages of her life as they relate to happenings in her family's "borning room." This room is set aside for birth and death. The first chapter opens with the impending arrival of Georgina's baby brother. Each chapter advances her in age a few more years and to another event associated with the room. Births, deaths, and serious illnesses affect Georgina and her family. Joys and tragedies come in their turn, and Georgina grows and changes along with them. Such a beautifully written and realized story.

Rae says

A pioneer girl's life, told through the scenes from her family's borning room...where all births and deaths take place. The cycles of life...birth, death, courtship, giving birth, death...are eloquently described. This is a most tender and uplifting book.

From the book: *As a child of five, Grandfather had shaken the hand of the aged Benjamin Franklin and received the great freethinker's blessing. I wondered what hands Franklin had shaken, looked down at Grandfather's fingers in mine, and felt I was reaching back through the centuries. And just as Grandfather had never forgotten his New Hampshire past or his parents' mettle, I promised him I'd preserve his memory. The chain of hands would never be broken.*

Joni says

Interesting story and easy to read. I liked how Fleischman came full circle in Georgina's life.

Laura (Book Scrounger) says

This may not have been the best book to read while pregnant (involves a scene of mother/infant death), but it was still an interesting look at new life and death in one family over the course of one girl's lifetime, mostly set during the Civil War era.

It's a quick read, so most of the "life story" focuses on her adolescent/teenage years including life on a farm, harboring a runaway slave, attending births of siblings, and pursuing slightly unconventional religious practices (for that time and town). The story keeps coming back to "the borning room" -- one room in the house where many different family members have come into the world or taken their last breaths (or been nursed while sick).

Katrin V says

This is a lesser known Fleischman book, and there is a reason why. It is a book written for children but not really easy for children. The book is all about birth and death. It is a good historical picture of how natural birth and death are woven into everyday life and quite a contrast with our hospital focused culture for these landmark events.

Meg says

A short YA piece with a Lion King-ish "Circle of Life" feel to it. The action follows a Civil War-era heroine literally from birth to death, all via events which take place in the "borning room" (a room in the house dedicated to the birthing of babies and passage of the dying). Addresses beautifully the theme of familial ties amid the tragic joy of life. At only 100 pages, it's really more of a sketch than a novel, but I still enjoyed it (especially the final chapter). I have a feeling I would have LOVED it if there had been some meat on the bones.

FAVORITE QUOTES:

Just as in our house, Mama filled any room she was in with light. I felt proud to be her daughter, flickering beside her.

Every leaf has its shadow, and finally meets it when it falls.

It dawned on me that what seemed to be a wedding was in truth another death in the family, a leaving disguised with laughter and dancing.

Titus, Ada, Lucilla, and Spencer had all left in turn. I chose to stay. I was the seed corn, saved for sowing.

Grandfather felt a ripe apple was an invitation to know the Creator and his goodness.

A good conscience is a soft pillow.

Stacy Allbritton says

I loved this book! It is the story of Georgina Lott, a farm girl from Ohio who tells the tale of her free-thinking family from the Civil War through the Great War. (You find out to whom she is telling the tale, but I won't spoil it.)

This book is not an action-packed, adventure-filled, roller coaster ride. It is an ordinary story of an girl who is extraordinarily insightful. She lives a simple life on the farm, but makes discoveries about the truly important things in life through her relationship with her family members: her mother, her grandfather, her brother, and later on, her husband.

The only warnings I would give to those of you who plan to recommend this novel to middle-school readers is that it contains graphic birth and death scenes, so you may have some explaining to do. It also has a free-thinking grandfather who chooses to follow his own doctrine instead of that of a church. Some people may find this offensive. That being said, the events are very tastefully written and a good way to open a dialogue with children.

If you value family above all else, this is the novel for you.

Melinda says

What I remember of this book is the child narrator's belief that pregnancy occurs when a married woman swallows a watermelon seed.

Kellyn Roth says

3.5 stars

Read for school. Was frankly a little uncomfortable with all the details of childbirth, though that could have been due to the fact that my mom was reading it aloud to me and my little brothers. I probably would have been fine with it if I was reading it by myself. ;) Overall, an okay story. Very sad and dramatic. No main plot that I could see.

Nancy says

Good story; could also be called the Dying Room or The Sick Room. Towards the end the séance was not believed by the main character and much superstition abounded, especially surrounding birth.

Catherine King says

This book has permanently shaped how I approach historical fiction. In that, I ask myself, "Does this clear the low, low bar set by 'The Borning Room'?"

It's not that the book is all that bad, it's just that it's not great historical fiction. The characters are flat, and weirdly enough everyone in the main character's family has surprisingly mid-twentieth-century viewpoints for people in the the 19th century. And it's not really clear *why* they have such enlightened opinions on everything-- I'm not saying that no one had ideas ahead of their time in the 19th century, but generally people had reasons for it. The whole aspect of characters with modern viewpoints in an ostensibly historical narrative left a bad taste in my mouth. Now one of my most important criteria for historical fiction is

showing me the *mindset* of the time period, made real in the people.

Linda says

I adored the writing and characters in this small book that is listed as YA, but I would categorize it as historical fiction. It doesn't read like fiction at all, however, and I'm blown away that a man wrote it. He clearly knows the female heart. Births and sickness and deaths take place in the Borning Room, off the kitchen in an old Ohio farmhouse that is filled with a big family. Think Waltons. Spanning the years prior to the Civil War to the beginning of WWI, the family deals with birth, illness, daily life, weddings, religion and spiritual beliefs, and an ever changing America. I heard about this book when researching an upcoming trip to Vicksburg. I'm so glad I did! It's such a heartwarming, life affirming, uplifting little gem of a book about what really matters most - love.

Brittany says

The Borning Room is a historical novel about Georgina and her family move from New Hampshire to Ohio in the early 1850s. Her father builds a home and ensures that there is a borning room right by the kitchen. In this room, birth and death are the only things that take place. Her mother is with child and worries about the baby dying since that has happened before. However, Georgina is born healthy and well. In the beginning, Georgina finds a run away slave named Cora and helps her hide away in their barn. This highly illegal, but she does it anyway because she knows that it is what's right. When the mother is pregnant again, Cora helps birth the baby and the father helps the slave escape to Canada. The book goes on explaining different citations where the family uses the borning room.

I enjoyed this book because it was historical fiction and while it told the story of a family, it also told of the history of that time. You see conflict between Georgina and her families beliefs and the beliefs of her family. You can see the difference in respect of race, the coming of medicine, and the views of these new inventions and ideals. Really quick read and fairly entertaining.

Gale says

The Days of Her Life

Eight-year-old Georgina Lott shares with us the story of her life in several memorable episodes or chapters, which take place over the years in a small Borning room built off the kitchen by Grandfather when he emigrated from New England to Ohio. The events which occur in the title room in this story span the years from 1860 through 1918 in the life of of four generations of one family. This spare room is used for births, illness and death--for Arrivals and Departures, as the protagonist puts it. It is the scene of extreme emotions when all family members are eventually put to the test. Ever appreciative of Nature her Grandfather was careful to include a small window on the world for whomever lay confined.

This story delights readers by the simplicity and honesty of Flesichman's characterizations. Narrated by a middle child the plot unfolds as the typical, unremarkable tale of her life--slowly and painstakingly spun on a loom of love and family traditions. We read of many 19th century superstitions re childbirth and daily life which seem curiously quaint to modern readers. Be prepared to settle back and savor this unpretentious

charmer, written by a male author who has captured the delicate essence of womanhood. For girls who will someday be women--the domestic backbone and heart of the homefire.

(November 26, 2012. I welcome dialogue with teachers.)
