

The Candymakers

Wendy Mass

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Logan is a Candymaker's son, who is compassionate and selfless, but secretly doubts his ability to succeed his father when he's older. Miles is the timid boy, who dwells abundantly on the afterlife and the memory of someone he failed to save. Daisy is a bright and animated girl, as well as a talented actress hiding a family secret. Philip is an arrogant son born into wealth, but with a hidden passion for something his father always disapproved of. Each of these four kids compete in a national competition to see who can make the newest and tastiest candy for the country. Each of the kids have been waiting for this moment to prove something to the world, and each of them want to win for different reasons. For a few days leading up to the final competition day, the four learn and study the art of candy-making at *Life is Sweet* candy factory. Along the way, they find themselves developing a unique friendship with each other but when a terrible secret becomes revealed about plans to jeopardize the candy factory, the competition becomes even more significant and competitive than ever.

This novel is suitable for readers age 8-14. In the novel, the kids are all around age 12. It is a realistic fiction novel. Because of the content and subject surrounding the idea of all things candy, younger audiences will probably take great delight in reading it.

At first, I didn't think much of this book. I only read it because one of my friends had recommended it to me, and I merely thought this was just about four kids trying to compete in a candy competition. However, I was really taken aback, when I started reading Miles, Daisy and Philip's personal accounts of the story, which highlighted some of their individual lives and backgrounds leading up to the candy competition. Suddenly the combined plot weighed so much heavier and held so much more meaning, once I could see the significance that each of these side characters held. It was so fascinating to see how different each character was internally, compared to how they acted on the outside with their peers. I never would have realized that seemingly trivial details would actually have weight and meaning like the fact that Miles had an "allergy" to merry-go-rounds and the color pink, or that Daisy just so happened to always have her nose in a romance novel. The character and plot development was really well-done. I like that all the sections written in different perspectives all converged to one significant point in the plot, and it really strengthened the moment so much more. I'm really happy that in the end, we got to see so much change in each of the characters, as they opened up about their flaws and faults to each other, in order to help strengthen and support one another. Although, they started out as rivals, the four characters earned something so much more rewarding in the end.

Overall, I've got to say, this novel really exceeded my expectations and now I can see why it was recommended to me. I think this is something I would have enjoyed more as an elementary school student, but I'm still surprised at how much I loved it as a teenager as well.

Recommended Titles:

The Candymakers and the Great Chocolate Chase by Wendy Mass

Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library by Chris Grabenstein

Book Scavenger by Jennifer Chambliss Bertman

The Mysterious Benedict Society by Trenton Lee Stewart

The Wishing Spell by Chris Colfer