



The Broken Lands

Kate Milford , Andrea Offermann (Illustrator)

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A crossroads can be a place of great power.

So begins this deliciously spine-tingling prequel to Kate Milford's *The Boneshaker*, set in the colorful world of nineteenth-century Coney Island and New York City. Few crossroads compare to the one being formed by the Brooklyn Bridge and the East River, and as the bridge's construction progresses, forces of unimaginable evil seek to bend that power to their advantage. Only two orphans with unusual skills stand in their way. Can the teenagers Sam, a card sharp, and Jin, a fireworks expert, stop them before it's too late?

A richly textured, slow-burning thriller about friendship, courage, love, and the age-old fight between good and evil.

The Broken Lands Details

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Author : Kate Milford , Andrea Offermann (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review The Broken Lands for online ebook

Amy says

Read-alike: The Blackthorn Key by Kevin Sands

Oh, Kate Milford. Only you can write historical fiction/steampunk/fantasy replete with fireworks (lots of them), folktales (some of them), and lots of Brooklyn-specific geography. You're one of the few who is writing specifically for smart, savvy, and snarky 7th-9th graders.

This book is a slow and atmospheric take on the old good v. evil tale, and in this case the good guys are a few plucky (and slightly unlucky) teens while the bad guys are permanent wanderers and henchmen extraordinaire. In the middle of this crisis our hero and heroine develop a purely awkward form of a quasi-romance that any upper middle grades reader will begin to understand.

Purely on character and cinematics, if you will, this book is one of the stronger fantasy reads I've encountered all year. However, its plotting and pacing were slow, even for that savvy teen reader, and I found the final battle scene underwhelming.... a lot of build-up for something I knew was coming.

I'll probably find a student who will be down for this kind of story, but that student is few and far between.

Emily says

This is the book that unites Boneshaker and Greenglass into a series and it is my favorite of the seven. There are those special books that light your imagination on fire and this is one. I love the character of Jin, and as the supernatural thread from this series begins to flow through this story, it's hard not to race ahead to find out what happens to her. Liao is an old man in this book, but we knew him from Bluecrowne and Lefthanded fate. This story just leaves you wanting to know what went on between 1810 and this story because he has some special powers now. He has to fight some extremely evil characters and how he became so powerful is something I'd love to know. Sam's story is another that I would like to know more about. He's an important character in this book, especially in the game of Santine, but secondary to Jin. There is so much that goes on in this book, I can't spoil everything, but the story made my heart pound in a way that not too much does at this time of my life.

Beth says

"You're in two halves at present," Clennan went on. "Often thought so. Come together, Moril, and there's no knowing what you might do."

The Broken Lands begins like Moril: in fragmented pieces. There's a piece that reads as a tribute to New York City, and a piece about a young boy making a living as a card shark in Coney Island, and a piece about a young girl who creates fireworks. They all have individual charms, but they don't come together well. They bump against each other. They jostle for space.

The tribute to New York City is especially awkward to me because mentioning "Atlantic Avenue" and "Front Street" does not a tribute make. It stands out because it sounds like a listing of dry facts, not like a well-integrated detail.

The story of the young boy fending for himself isn't especially notable, either. It isn't unique, and to its detriment, it's tied to Coney Island; there's nothing particularly New York about this story, and I think it's weakened by the determined parade of places that passes as Sam's intimate knowledge of the city. Also, it's contradicted by (view spoiler)

Jin, the firework girl, has some of the few good moments early on: a spectacular show, for one. But her story doesn't quite fit with everyone else's. There's a very quick acceptance from people who are supposed to be suspicious New Yorkers, and there's a very quick acceptance on her part, too, from someone who's been a loner for a long time.

There's also bits of social commentary that - well, they're certainly appropriate, but I don't know if they're appropriate for historical New York. Though that wouldn't bother me if they, too, didn't stand out as poorly-integrated elements.

And then, about two thirds into the book, all the parts come together. Really, really well. It's interesting that the book stops being a tribute to Brooklyn and New York and becomes essentially straight fantasy at that point. There's a card game - a really great card game. (At some point, probably between *Shield of Stars* and *The Cardturner*, I became a fan of great card games.) There's a daring fireworks display, a secret ritual, visions, and demons. And there are some fabulous quotes:

"If there was only one way to read a book," Burns said with a little smile, "any book in the world - if there was only one way to read and understand it, what would be the point of reading that book?"

And then there's the ending. Which manages to be about surviving a war and living in a broken world and understanding humanity, all while being overt but without being preachy. It almost reads as a fantasy trial, which funnily enough feels entirely fitting for a post-Civil War generation:

"I do not understand *country*."

"It's what we all thought we were fighting for on the killing fields."

..."So pain and anger - this is acceptable if done for this thing that is *country*?"

..."Nobody's saying that... Only that there is something we thought was worth fighting for, maybe the only thing both sides could agree on."

There's a degree of clear-sightedness coupled with empathy there that makes the entire scene sing with truth.

So the novel ends on a very high note: it goes from a New York with clumsily-integrated fantasy elements to a fantasy where demons are the prevailing threat. And then, funnily enough, it ends with a real tribute to New York.

"After a parade... when all that's left is confetti in the streets, everyone goes back to work. Somebody unhitches the horses, somebody sweeps up, and little by little, garbage starts to pile up in its usual places."

(I've seen Times Square after New Year's. If you haven't, be glad of that.)

And then there's this:

"Never expect the world to make sense before breakfast, kid."

Words to live by.

Sarah Sammis says

In terms of the road trip genre, New York is one of the terminals for road trips: either being the starting point, or the ending point. New York isn't a city that can contain a road trip. A crossroads battle in the middle of a metropolis, even one that at the time was more than one city being in the process of becoming a single city, just doesn't work.

<http://pussreboots.com/blog/2017/comm...>

katayoun Masoodi says

4 stars without the next to last chapters. must say I could have done with the end chapters and all that lectures and the meaning of the life and enlightenment like stuff!!! too lecture-y...

Cleo says

I loved Kate Milford's *The Boneshaker*, so I was really looking forward to this one, which just came out on September 4th (I got a review copy from Harcourt Children's Books.) I wouldn't say it was quite as good as *The Boneshaker*, but nonetheless, I enjoyed it. *The Broken Lands* is set in 1877 in New York City (mainly in Brooklyn.) The Brooklyn is just going up, and dark forces are rising at the crossroads of the East River and the new bridge. The mysterious Jack wants to claim New York for his own. Somehow, Sam, a fifteen year old card sharp, and Jin, a Chinese girl who's a master with explosives, get drawn into the battle to protect the five pillars of the city (which are people by the way) and save New York and possibly the whole country. Jack himself doesn't show up until the very end, but you meet Walker and Bones, two evil henchman who come to scout out the city and get rid of the pillars. You see, Jack plans to replace the pillars with his own people. Jack's back-story is explained in the book.

I would say that this one is even darker than *The Boneshaker*, if that's even possible. There was killing in both, but in *The Broken Lands* it was a lot more graphic and violent. Still, I liked the book, and even though I'm not familiar with Brooklyn at all, it was nice that it was in New York. Also, Tom Guyot is a character in both stories.

I liked how the Civil War was incorporated into the story. The whole country is still reeling from the aftereffects of that calamity, so anything could set the whole country into more chaos. Something like the falling of New York City. I also liked the concept of the roamers, people (or perhaps not people) who drift here and there. I liked the plot and the fantasy elements as well as the characters. Overall, this was a solid

fantasy read.

www.novareviews.blogspot.com

Kate says

Again, grain of salt, cause, you know, I wrote the thing...but I like it a lot.

Randy says

A few spoilers ahead.

This is a prequel to the splendid *The Boneshaker*. Neither my son nor I were quite as enamored with this book. I think we preferred following one protagonist, and although both main characters were interesting, we didn't get to know either of them as well.

I wound up confused about the character of Jack, called Jack Hellcoal in this book (not sure he wasn't called that in the first one). After the threat of Jack's arrival looms over the evil ones the whole book, he has a disappointingly brief appearance, but it's a much different person than in the first book. In *The Boneshaker*, Jack seems like an ambitious but rather neutral third party: clever and cynical. In this prequel, he's presented as basically a second Satan, someone the lesser devils or whatever fear greatly. Didn't make sense to me.

Still, this is an enjoyable book, with plenty of close scrapes and, importantly to me, adult characters who are friendly and supportive, but also pragmatic and with a small tolerance for nonsense.

Samantha Chaffin says

I bought THE BROKEN LANDS on a gut feeling. I found it alone on a shelf in my indie bookstore, saw the cover, and knew that I would like it. Bridges and card sharps and Coney Island and magic? Sold.

I couldn't have imagined that this book would remind me what it feels like to fall in love with a story. I mean, the way I used to when I was a kid reading every library book she could get her hands on. That's what this felt like. Remembering.

Milford's writing is magic. It's luxurious and rich, and she writes about Brooklyn the way I would write about Los Angeles - like she's in love with the city. The world-building is just gorgeous. Honestly, every time I picked this book up, I felt like I was dreaming. It was that vivid. I loved the characters, too (and can I just say THANK YOU to Milford for writing a Chinese American girl in historical fiction without making her a damsel. Actually, just thank you for writing ethnic diversity without making it all about how ETHNICALLY DIVERSE !!!! they are).

This book is one of the best purchases I've made this year. I will say that it's not one to speed read, but... who the hell cares. I didn't. You won't.

Katharine Ott says

"The Broken Lands" - written by Kate Milford and published in 2012 by Clarion Books, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. In the Author's Note Milford writes, "I hope that, first and foremost, you will read this book as the adventure tale I set out to write." And this indeed was a first-rate adventure story infused with magical realism, a collection of delightfully fleshed out characters, and a common quest for the "good guys" to strive toward. The plot is too intricate to detail except to say that a city must be saved, and much of the fun of the book is to watch it form and develop. Somehow, Milford is able to make this story a tender romance, an exposition on firework construction, a light historical primer, a bringing-the-band-together tale and a scintillating fight between good and evil, and it all fits perfectly together. "The country is wide and strange." I recommend this to anyone looking for a rewarding story.

Lisa B. says

My Thoughts

This was excellent. I've been telling everyone this book is Stephen King-ish, a descriptive term meaning ookie spookie.

I fell in heavy like with Jin and Sam. For young teenagers, they have already experienced many of life's unpleasant moments. Jin is resilient and strong. Sam is street smart and loyal. Together they must stand up against evil.

I was not aware when I requested this book that it was classified as juvenile fiction and honestly, I could not tell this from the writing. It was suspenseful, magical and just down right entertaining!

Thank you to Houghton Mifflin Harcourt and Netgalley for allowing me to read this in exchange for an unbiased review.

Publish date: September 4, 2012.

Jordan Finch says

Having only read Milford's *Greenglass House* books before this and despite having been warned that the rest of her books are darker, I was still not prepared for just how creepy and ominous this book was.

The Broken Lands is a tale of good vs. evil filled with history, diversity, and lots and lots of fireworks, all set in a growing NYC. It's fantastical and supernatural, but also starkly realistic in terms of societal norms and the various -isms that plagued the country shortly after the Civil War. There's a clear sense of this tale being part of a larger story without overwhelming or downplaying Sam and Jin's own story, and the characters themselves are richly described and fleshed-out, with flaws and weaknesses as well as strengths and abilities

that make them integral in saving the city.

On the other hand, Milford's fantastic writing means that the villains are thoroughly described as well, and they're what make this story so creepy, and not just for an older MG/younger YA reader. There's a genuine sense of evil from these characters, and although they do to some degree play by the rules, they aren't afraid to take out anyone who gets in their way, including children, and Milford's willingness to cross that line is what really makes my skin crawl.

My favorite thing about this book has to be Jin's pyrotechnics. Yes, her skills in making fireworks are an important part of the bigger story, but I just absolutely loved all the chemistry and the science behind her creations. Her use of smaller fireworks to protect herself was a blast, too, and it really showed the extent of her brilliance; it takes a lot more effort and precision to create small, mostly harmless explosions than it does to make a giant one.

The Broken Lands brings together Milford's more historical books with her *Greenglass House* series, both in terms of folklore and through Easter eggs here and there that make it so much fun to read. And while it's certainly darker than the *Greenglass House* books, that darkness is certainly needed to raise the stakes for the fate of NYC. *The Broken Lands* is another wonderful read in this fictional world of Roamers and magic and Jack Hellcoal; if you're a fan of Milford's and have yet to read this one, put it on your list for a good Halloween read.

TheBookSmugglers says

In these lands, these broken lands of these United States of America in 1877, the Civil War and the Reconstruction have left ugly scars. In these lands, these broken lands, the new cohabit with the old, poverty with riches, ancient traditions with wondrous technologies, bigotry with tolerance. In the crossroad formed by the Brooklyn Bridge and the East River, a man without a country wishes to claim this place for his own – by blood, by fire and by getting rid of its five pillars.

Teenagers Sam, the son of an Italian immigrant and a card player, and Jin, a Chinese girl and a fireworks expert are part of a group that stand on this man's way: a group formed by people from all walks of life who embody these broken lands and are old and new, rich and poor, traditional and modern, prejudiced and tolerant.

A crossroads can be a place of great power; this should not come as any surprise. It is a place of choosing, of testing, of transition, and there is power in all of those things.

These motifs permeate *The Broken Lands* – a prequel to Kate Milford's excellent *The Boneshaker* – to tell a story that inevitably wishes for these broken lands to be mended and to be healed. Not that this is an easy thing. It can't be an easy thing when so many different threads coexist. But a conscious effort is made by the characters that inhabit this story – they are tested to their limits, they are allowed to choose and they are central figures in a transitional moment of their story. I loved the themes of this novel as much as I loved the incredible characters and the development of the plot to thwart the villains – all of it blended together seamlessly.

If *Boneshaker* was definitely Middle Grade, *The Broken Lands* is firmly set in YA territory: its main characters are a bit older, its horrors are a lot more graphic and a lovely romance develops between its two

main characters. Just like its predecessor, *The Broken Lands* is a novel that seeks its inspiration in folklore and religious themes but which shapes and bends stories in a way that is both old-fashioned and extremely bold:

There is the development of an idea about a mythical as well as mystical creation of a country, via its cities and its people. In it, each place is held together by its community's pillars – men and women who hold offices and positions like for example, that of a history/story-keeper. What is all the more interesting is that these pillars change over time, as do their functions: here, power is a fluid thing and as changeable as the times. It comes as no surprise that – without spoiling too much – the people that hold New York together are not simply old white folks but a mixture, an encounter of immigrants that helped shape America: from Ireland, from China, from Italy; as well as American born and bred, including African Americans. Its concept of family is that of bond rather than blood and heroism is what you choose to do rather than what you are.

Its central character, Jin, is a Chinese girl who is strong, determined, enterprising and fierce. Who takes to what she must do to save this city and its citizens with aplomb and only a little reluctance. Her Italian friend Sam shares the point of view in this story and is equally enterprising but functions more as a side-kick. Someone who is full of admiration for the very characteristics that make Jin so independent. These two develop a relationship – friendship and eventually something more – in a natural way that is superbly well-done.

There is also a lovely appreciation for the art of reading and for what a reader brings to and takes from a book.

And this is what I take from this book: *The Broken Lands* goes beyond formulas and clichés. It has an awesome plot, full of twists and turns and adventurous moments and also, EXPLOSIONS. It has romance and awesome characters left and right. It is truly scary as any horror novel should be. Ultimately, it is more than a simple story: it is a book that has heart and soul and whose ideas will engage each reader in a different way.

This is the sign of a True Book and Kate Milford is a Master of Methods.

Alicia Marie says

The Broken Lands was one of the best books I have read this year. All of its qualities are interesting and unique, something I wish every book would possess. The characters have life to them and aren't just bland and boring.

Such as the main characters,...Sam and Jin were both impressive. Jin worked with Fireworks and Sam was a card sharper who outplayed tourists waiting to gain or lose some money. Even though Sam's life was entertaining, I found Jin's even more. I mean,...when do you read about a girl who entertains people with fireworks (aka explosives)?

The settings and character backgrounds were historically accurate. And because both characters come from such interesting backgrounds, it's like a whole new approach on History class.

Kate Milford (the author) has such a great writing style. It reminds me of Stephen King by how creepy it can

get. Truly, the whole book is on the creepy side. Even if it is an action adventure there is demon conjuring, hell, and plenty of blood written on walls and dead bodies. Oh, and not to forget sand people with strange skeleton figures.

The pacing is well done, there wasn't a part that was too slow or too fast. The dialogue was well distributed across the pages and details didn't become info dumps. If I could change one thing in this novel though, it would be the second chapter.

It was confusing and awkward whilst the rest of the story was not. I don't really know why it was so poor in quality unlike the rest of the writing. But it was, so I guess that is that. The side characters were too quickly introduced and the setting was as well. And while I was trying to wrap my head around what was happening the dialogue was off and too much was going on. As if the author was trying to squeeze everything too tightly together for it to be in one chapter.

The romance was AMAZING. I loved how the character slowly came together as a newly formed couple. It wasn't just like, "hey, I have a crush on you!". Instead Sam and Jin had minor drawbacks with one another that made their new forming relationship actually REALISTIC.

How the story ended was also impressive. I mean, when was it that I read an ending like that?
(view spoiler)

I really recommend you reading this book.

Maggie Stiefvater says

This was quite agreeable. I've ordered the next one.
