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IS 234- Contemporary Children's Literature

Dr. Walter

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Book Reviews

Snyder, Zilpha Keatley. *The Egypt Game*. New York: Atheneum, 1976.

April thinks living with her grandmother will be boring but then she meets Melanie and the Egypt game begins.

Snyder, Zilpha Keatley. *The Egypt Game*. 1976. 215p. Atheneum. \$14.95 (0-689-30006-9).

Gr. 4-6. When April's mother sends her away to live with her grandmother, April is sure that the university town will not be nearly as exciting as Hollywood. Boy is she wrong! After meeting her neighbor Melanie they discover an interest in imagination games and ancient Egypt. This leads them to create the Egypt game, with Melanie's little brother Marshall, in an empty lot by the antique and curio shop. As more people are added to the game, tragedy strikes. A child is murdered! Now no one can play outside. Will the Egypt game ever be played again? Will the murderer be found? These and other questions are answered in *The Egypt Game*. This book is good for kids who like to read. Zilpha Keatley Snyder captures the world of children making their own fun in her engaging prose. Although today's children may be surprised to see kids having fun without video games and television, they will enjoy the adventure and mystery.

The Egypt Game

by Zilpha Keatley Snyder.
215 pp. New York:
Atheneum, 1976
\$14.95. (Ages 8 to 12)

There has been much talk lately about how television, video games and the Internet are rotting children's minds and bodies. They don't read or go outside and play. Maybe what they need is a reminder of simpler times. Maybe they need to read *The Egypt Game*.

Although *The Egypt Game* was written in 1976, it still deals with issues relevant to kids today: moving, making new friends, and crime. Throughout the adventure and mystery of the book one thing is conspicuously absent, television. The characters read, go to school, and play outside but never do they watch T.V.

The story begins when April's mother sends her to live with her grandmother. The university town is not where April wants to be after living with her aspiring actress mother in Hollywood but she figures it will not be for too long. Soon she meets her neighbor Melanie and her younger brother Marshall. Melanie and April soon discover their mutual love for imagination games and ancient Egypt. When they find the unused yard behind the A-Z curio shop, they realize it will be perfect for the Egypt game.

In order to prepare for the game, Melanie and April read all of the books, fiction and non-fiction, about ancient Egypt that are in their local public library. They also are characterized as voracious readers when they first meet.

After the research is done and a new tenant in their building, Elizabeth, is added to the group, they are ready to begin the game. Unfortunately this is when tragedy strikes. A child in their neighborhood is murdered and the police suspect a resident is to blame. Fingers start pointing at the Professor, a quiet old man who owns the A-Z shop. Now they can not leave the

apartment building except to go to school. With Halloween approaching, the children decide to make costumes for the game. Parents agree to serve as chaperones for groups of kids so that the neighborhood can go trick-or-treating. This is a golden opportunity to visit Egypt again.

When they sneak off to Egypt during Halloween, they are followed by Toby and Ken from their sixth grade class. Now that they've been discovered they bring the boys in to keep the secret. Ken would rather play basketball but Toby is very excited and asks the girls what books they looked at so that he can come up with ideas too.

Soon the game is in full swing again with Egyptian names, hieroglyphics for sending messages, and new ceremonies. Then comes the oracle. After their teacher talks about them in class, the kids decide that an oracle is just what Egypt needs to liven things up. After more research the oracle is started. The oracle ends up starting another mystery when someone not involved with the game leaves an answer.

It all gets wrapped up at the end with the murderer being caught, with help from Marshall, and the discovery that the Professor answered the oracle's question.

Throughout the novel, the children use the library and books in order to fuel their imaginations for their game. The adventures they create are as riveting as the ones on T.V. or in video games. *The Egypt Game* can open a child's mind to the power of their imaginations.