



It's not nice to compare a new novel to an undisputed classic, so don't think about "The Princess Bride" when deciding whether to tackle "The Goblin's Puzzle." Almost no book could stand up next to that one. Caveats aside, "The Goblin's Puzzle" is a simple but amusing story with some of the sly, self-aware wit that animates William Goldman's masterpiece. Andrew S. Chilton just wants to entertain and have a little mind-teasing fun along the way. He achieves that with this low-key, modest effort about a Boy who is a Slave (maybe, sort of) and a Girl who is Alice (but just Plain Alice, not Princess Alice) and a rather apologetic dragon and a mischievous Goblin (who isn't quite as cold-hearted or tricky as goblins are supposed to be). You'll find kidnappings and danger and some brain teasers and -- let's be frank -- a happy ending, all of it taking place in a kingdom/world small enough you don't feel intimidated but big enough to offer a little scope to a Boy who wants to be a hero or maybe just a Hero. -- Michael Giltz