



# The Apprenticeship of Lucas Whitaker

*Cynthia DeFelice*

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## **A Matter of Life or Death**

It's 1849, and twelve-year-old, Lucas Whitaker is all alone after his whole family dies of a disease called consumption which has swept through the community. Lucas is grief-stricken and filled with guilt. He might have saved his mother, who was the last to die, if only he had listened to news of a strange cure for this deadly disease.

Unable to manage the family farm by himself, Lucas finds work as an apprentice to Doc Beecher, doctor, dentist, barber and undertaker. Doc amputates a leg as easily as he pulls a tooth, yet when it comes to consumption, he remains powerless, unwilling to try the cure he calls nonsense. Lucas can't accept Doc's disbelief, and he joins others in the dark ritual they believe is their only hope. The startling results teach Lucas a great deal about fear, desperation, and the scientific reasoning that offers hope for a true cure.

A School Library Journal Best Book of the Year

An ALA Notable Book for Children

A New York Public Library 1997 Best Books for the Teenage

A CBC Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies for 1997

00-01 Minnesota's Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award Masterlist

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