



Three by the Sea

Mini Grey

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In a house by the sea there happily live a dog, a cat and a mouse. Well, happily enough until a stranger knocks on the door one night, offering them each a special free gift. Who is this mysterious salesman blowing into their little world and turning it upside-down? And can their happy home survive his trouble-making gifts?

Three by the Sea Details

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From Reader Review Three by the Sea for online ebook

Danny says

Three friends with divergent talents and interests live by the sea in what turns out to be uneasy harmony. A stranger comes into their lives, sowing resentment among the friends. Things come to a head when the friends almost lose their lives in the ocean, having driven one of their number to attempt to leave home. When they return to their house they discover that the stranger has left and stolen their boat. Their lives, however, are not lessened by his duplicity and manipulation. His encouragement to each individual leads them to richer experiences of life.

The lesson here may be that good things can come from even the jerkiest of jerks. Or maybe that friends should stick together even when they feel like their paths are leading them away from each other.

So...do with that what you will.

JP's says

This is the 4th Mini Grey book that I've read to my 3-year old daughter. I'm a fan (probably more than my daughter is)! She likes Mini Grey books a lot, and I LOVE them. I love her illustrations, the quirkiness. I love that mouse only made fondue for dinner and love his little cookbook of fondue recipes. The details are wonderful! We study the page together for a long time and note all the funny things we see. I read the other reviews and agree with some of the issues with the book...the motive of the Fox stranger is not clear. Is he a bad guy? (because he stirred up trouble and dissatisfaction between the friends and almost ruined their friendships) And yet, the ideas he "planted" and the packet of seeds that he left, were the catalyst for changes and improvement in the friends' lives. So he wasn't ALL bad. Children's stories usually have a clear Villain/bad guy, making it easier to grasp. That's not the case in this book. The Mysterious Stranger is indeed very mysterious...he appears out of nowhere, he seems to have a mischief-making agenda, yet the outcome of his visit turns out to be a good one. It's subtle and complex for a children's book. It's true that my kid didn't get it: "Why did the Fox take their bed?" "Why are they fighting?!" "Oh No! Mouse is drowning!" "Why did Fox go?" Still, she is very engaged with book. For now, since she's 3, I try to sum it up saying, "Sometimes friends will not be happy with each other and will fight, but good friends don't give up on each other and learn to get along."

Dolly says

This is a fun story that reminds me a bit of Pumpkin Soup. Three friends live together in relative harmony, each with their own specializations for pitching in around the house. But one day a stranger sows the seeds of discontent by bringing to light the imperfections of each friend's contribution. It's an interesting tale and (I think) has a satisfying resolution to the discord. I think it's a good book to read to children to help emphasize the importance of everyone pitching in to help make the household run smoothly. As I always remind our girls, "Many hands make light work." Overall, I thought this was a very entertaining book, and with a fairly short narrative and colorful illustrations, this story will likely entertain children from preschool on up (we have some family visiting and even our 11 year-old niece thought it was pretty good!)

Karen says

I felt like the ending was a bit of a twist and I appreciated it.

Melki says

[At first I thought the stranger was trying to drive the pals away so he could take over their house, but in the end, their friendship is strengthened, and he ends up helping them out. (hide spoiler)]

Kathryn says

This is the story of a black cat, a white dog, and a gray mouse, who live happily (or so they think) in a house by the sea. The dog tends the garden, the cat cleans the house, and the mouse does the cooking. 3.5 STARS
One day, A. Stranger arrives with an offer for them to use "The Winds of Change" to shake up their lives, and proceeds to point out to the mouse that maybe the dog should plant herbs instead of bones; to the dog that the cat's method of housecleaning may not be the most productive; and to the cat that perhaps mouse shouldn't make fondue for every meal. I loved many of the details in the illustrations (such as Mouse's fondu recipes and the "Good Mousekeeping" book on his shelf!) and found the story engaging but some of the transitions in the narrative seemed a bit awkward.

I certainly understand why this book is not universally adored. I agree with the reviewers who find the message a bit complex and ambiguous. Indeed, I am not entirely sure whether the "Winds of Change" were a good thing. I think they are supposed to be. I think the message is that we may think we are happy, but perhaps we are just complacent, and that we need fresh perspectives. Then again, A. Stranger seemed just a bit mean-spirited, turning the characters against one another. While I do appreciate that not all books for children need to have an "obvious moral", I recommend that parents skim over some of the negative reviews here to see if this is right for their family.

Melissa says

This book is kind of a mess thematically. So change is good, okay, but is it also okay to plop yourself into the middle of a family and slyly, deliberately stir up trouble? I don't care if they are all happier in the end, that damn wolf couldn't have cared less if they weren't. Their happy ending totally relied on an external crisis. Plus he stole their boat. Two stars instead of one because I loved the details in the first five pages. (Especially the wolf arriving on a pool float.)

Libby Haydon says

Lovely book by Mini Grey about friendship and working together. Three friends who live together and each have a job to do in the house, the garden, the housework and the cooking but none of them appreciate what

each other is doing, until a visiting stranger gives them some advice and gifts and after a traumatic experience they start to work better together.

Heidi says

I adored the details in the illustrations and talking points it led to. Definitely a fun read. I spotted this one at the library and I'm glad we took it home to read.

Sheri says

A cat, mouse, and dog live together. Reminds me of a Grimm fairy tale featuring a bird, a mouse, and a sausage (yep, a sausage). Still, cool to read aloud with my nine year old daughter. She wanted to know more about the gifts the mysterious stranger left for each of them. In the Grimm version, there is a much darker ending. In this version, there is a positive lesson on friendship, love and loyalty. For an adult, there are some pretty subtle themes on good and shades of evil. Worth at least one read aloud.

Randie D. Camp, M.S. says

Three friends, (dog, cat, and mouse) live happily by the sea until a stranger comes to visit and stirs things up, making everyone unhappy. But the stranger does indirectly teach them a lesson about friendship. Great story.

When I read this book with my 5 year-old son, we had a conversation about communication, thank you Mini Grey for opening the door to a meaningful discussion about something so important for healthy friendships and relationships in general.

Shanshad Whelan says

An odd book . . . I'm not sure it's one I'd read aloud. While the first part with the stranger causing disharmony is clever and the middle where the animals find a way through and reunite isn't bad, it's unclear exactly what the fox stranger's purpose is. He steals the boat and leaves seeds behind. He causes unrest which winds up making the trio stronger. But he seems intentionally to be causing strife and doesn't feel as genuine as the author of making the trio realize how important they are to one another. The true nature of the stranger is decidedly ambiguous.

Nielson says

Mouse, Cat, and Dog live in a little house by the sea, each of them responsible for a different daily task. One day, a fox from the Winds of Change Company comes to call. With his visit, he brings discord and discontent...but he also brings something that may not have happened any other way--change. Some parts of the book didn't seem very cohesive, and the message of cooperation, working together, and

self-examination might be missed by some of the intended audience, but it could be a great book to use to spark some discussion. The illustrations were fantastic with their collage quality and variety.

Sometimes we all need a meddler to prompt us to some good old fashioned self-examination.

Hannah Higson says

This book is about a cat, dog and mouse who all live together. The cat does the housework, the dog does the gardening and the mouse does the cooking. One day a stranger turns up telling the three animals that he can offer solutions to all their problems. The stranger turns all their lives upside down and the animals all end up arguing.

In the end the animals all help each other and the stranger leaves.

I am not sure if I like this book. It has left me confused. I am not sure whether the stranger is supposed to be good or what the author is trying to infer by it. On one hand you can argue that the stranger shows that the animals can do more than one job and work together. However, you can also argue that the cat, dog and mouse had a system that worked and the stranger came and changed all this for the worse as it led to an argument.

Reader says

The meddler. We all know one. Leave it to Mini Grey (Traction Man is Here!) and her formidable talents to pull off a picture book that explores this subject with unexpected nuance. Sure the meddler can be bad, but just maybe they provide an opportunity for a bit of self-examination as well. A black cat, a white dog, and a gray mouse live together on an otherwise uninhabited island. The trio are happy with their arrangement until a fox washes up on shore and messes everything up. An excellent look at friendship and the difficult-to-define concept of group dynamics. -T

I agree with T--I enjoyed this friendship book as well! ~s
