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Jeanne Willis , Gwen Millward (Illustrator)

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The Bog Baby is a magical story by Jeanne Willis and Gwen Millward

When two small sisters go fishing to the magic pond, they find something much better than a frog or a newt. They find a bog baby. Small and blue with wings like a dragon, the girls decide to make him their secret. I won't tell if you won't.

But the bog baby is a wild thing, and when he becomes poorly, the girls decide they must tell their mum. And she tells them the greatest lesson: if you really love something, you have to let it go.

Jeanne wrote her first book when she was five years old and hasn't stopped writing since. She has now written over eighty titles, including picture books, novels and television scripts. She has also won numerous awards, including the Children's Book Award, the Sheffield Children's Book Award and the Silver Smarties Prize. Her teen novel, *Naked Without a Hat*, was shortlisted for the Whitbread Award in 2004. She often takes inspiration from dreams and interesting conversations with strangers.

Gwen Millward studied illustration in Edinburgh and now spends all of her time painting and writing stories for children about her favourite subject, beasts. Her first book for Puffin, *Guess What I Found in Dragon Wood*, published in April 2007.

Other wonderful books by either of the two include:

The King of Tiny Things; Guess what I found in Dragon Wood; Happy Birthday in Dragon Wood; Sing a Song of Bottoms; Bottoms Up!; Silly Cecil and Clever Cubs; The Wheels on the Bus; Delilah Darling is in the Library; There's an Ouch in my Pouch!; Who's in the Loo?; The Monster Bed; Tadpole's Promise; The Beasties

The Bog Baby Details

Date : Published May 1st 2008 by Puffin

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Author : Jeanne Willis , Gwen Millward (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review The Bog Baby for online ebook

Sarah says

I entered because of the cover. I really enjoyed the illustrations.

This is a great story about loving nature, exploring, and protecting nature. It is about letting nature be where it is supposed to be.

Abigail says

What a wonderful book, which raises important ideas about the individual responsibility we all have to look after our planet. The narrative is simple but not patronising, and is accompanied by stunning illustrations which really capture the whimsical nature of childhood adventures. After recently having a lesson in how to conduct scientific field work for a primary aged class, I can say that this book would be a fantastic way to introduce the children to the topic of environment and wildlife conservation, and the role we all play in protecting it.

Hannah Hayes says

This story is about two sisters that go fishing on a magic lake and find a "bog baby." This creature is blue and has wings. The girls decide they want to take him home and keep him a secret, however their new pet is not very well trained and they must tell their mother. This is a fun story but it also could start a lesson on bogs. Bogs are an interesting part of nature that is always talked about. Something can fall into a bog and be preserved for years, so who knows what might come out of one?

Janessa says

I just have to add this book to my list for it's magical sweetness. The plot is pretty standard: two girls find a cute little creature in the pond near their home and take it home as a pet. They love their bog baby, and dote on it, making a home for it and feeding it bits of cake. But, inevitably, their pet grows sick, and sad. It needs to return to its home.

What makes the book stand out are the ethereal illustrations. The airy washes of pink, blue, and yellow transport the reader to a place that is more of a mood than a physical setting. The drawings of the bog baby himself, in his fairy-like world of cattails and dragonfly wings, exude magic. Meanwhile, the story of the girls, and of generations of girls - mother, daughter, and granddaughter - ground the story in a reality that is full of poignant connections, loss, and re-birth.

Best of all, when the story was done, my captivated little readers were so caught up in the magic of it that they turned to me and asked, "Are bog babies real?"

Feargal says

wasn't as keen on this book. it was a bit predictable and the children were liars. also the six year students were bring very immature, laughing and shouting out and it really ruined the flow.

Maureen says

“Long ago, when we were little, me and Chrissy did something bad. We said we were going to Annie’s house to play, but we didn’t.” With those enticing first lines, Jeanne Willis invites readers, young and old, to turn the page of this charming tale of youthful curiosity that will evoke readers’ memories of outdoor childhood adventures. Making a promise not to divulge their deception, Chrissy and Annie venture through Bluebell Wood to a magic pond, fishing for newts, instead catching “something much better,” a winged dragon-tailed Bog Baby. Distraught over the Bog Baby’s declining health, the girls finally admit their misdeed to Annie’s mother, asking her assistance to save the creature. Double page spreads of delicate bright colored pen and pencil drawings, combined with soft watercolor backgrounds of green and blue contribute to the feeling of serenity in Bluebell Wood. Millward’s use of single page spreads with boldly colored figures set against pale backgrounds draws the reader’s eye to the page’s central action (i.e. black crows stalking a leashed Bog Baby) and characters’ facial expressions. Varying font styles and size (italics, bold, the alignment of letters within words) complement the intensity of the characters' emotions and add to the story's whimsy. The playful illustration of “hundreds of Bog Babies swinging through the bluebells’ will delight readers as they discover what Annie’s daughter stumbles upon years later as she too explores Bluebell Wood’s magic pond. Using simple text and strong verbs, Willis crafts a story readers can easily relate to while subtly weaving a powerful message about honesty and love. Use this book with K-6 students to stimulate discussions about honesty, respecting living things or as a truly wonderful read aloud.

The Bog Baby by Jeanne Willis; illustrated by Gwen Millward

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unpaged, \$16.99

hardcover, picture book

Kathryn says

My friend Abigail recommended this book to "Anyone Who Believes in the Possibility of Enchantment!" so I knew that I had to get this book and it completely enchanted me ;-) It had been some time since I heard about the book (my library took ages to obtain it) so I didn't remember what the book was about (besides, obviously, the very adorable and magical Bog Baby) and I think that the joy of surprise and discovery helped weave the magic around this book. So, I won't say more than that this is a beautifully told and sublimely illustrated story about believing (in yourself, in truth, in possibilities, in family and in enchantment) and that first bittersweet moment when you realize you love something more than yourself; so much so that you will do anything for it. This book squeezed my heart and I highly recommend it.

Parents should note that, on the last page of the book, there is a section which could be easily photocopied for children to record their own Bog Baby sighting and there is a real address to send this information (to the publisher) which is very cool for those children who are fascinated with research and/or mail.

Bianca Orellana says

Adorable and magical!

Ali Brian says

I have been enjoying and sharing this book with my Year 2 class during guided reading. The story is about two small sisters who go fishing in a "magic pond". However, they catch something much better than a "frog or a newt". They find a "Bog Baby" and decide to make him their secret.

The story tackles the issue of secrets and captured the group of children immediately. The opening sentence sets the scene with the statement "Long ago, when we were little, me and Chrissy did something bad". Pausing, whilst these words are absorbed by the children seemed to fire up something in most of the children that resonates a "Hang on a minute, this sounds like an interesting story." The breaking of rules is intriguing for children who generally know how to do the right thing. This moralistic tale proceeds with punchy sentences, detailed language and intriguing illustrations. The friendship between the little girl and her friend Chrissy is charming and seems typical of curious children of that age (7-8 years). The mysterious Bog Baby is described beautifully and the tale lends itself to reenactment. The moment where the girl and Chrissy wanted to share their secret with Mum highlights how small "fibs" can become tangled and complex. The age old story of higher love is subtly told alongside the moral that if you love and care for something or someone then you should let it live in its natural habitat. The moment when Mum discovered them is made tangible by the succinct and simplistic style. I let the moment hang for a time and many of the children gasped. The realisation that Mum knew all about Bog Babies was subtle and yet delivered a global message that adults often understand the nuances of telling the truth. Captivating and beautifully illustrated, I would heartily recommend "The Bog Baby" for Key Stage 1 children.

Bogdan says

Idea din spatele povestii chiar ii invata ceva pe copii, stilul de desen mi-a placut, e mai putin abstract ca altele, inasa pretul de librarii e foarte ridicat.

Noroc cu reducerile de pe elefant.ro. Folosesc paypalul asa ca apelez foarte des la ei. Mi-as dori sa pot comanda si de la alte librarii, dar nu sunt compatibil cu modalitatile de plata.

I enjoyed the idea of the book, the drawings are quite nice, colorful, but the price it's kinda high on a library shelf.

Ann says

A delightful, sweet, and timeless story!

Not only does "The Bog Baby" have a wonderful message about believing in something, but it also has a wonderful message about "leaving wild things in the wild."

Yes, the "if you love it set it free" plot is nothing new, but I loved the approach Willis takes here.

In this story two little girls go fishing (even though their not supposed to go alone, which the book does make a point of noting is was not a good thing for them to do - definitely reminded me of those few times in childhood where you really knew you *shouldn't* do something but for whatever reason you did anyway...) but the two girls find a Bog Baby and decide to take it home and care for it. Of course, everything seems okay at first, but when the Bog Baby starts getting sick the girls have to decide what to do.

I love the illustrations and the author's note in the back, and I was happy that the Bog Baby did seem to love the little girls in return.

This is definitely a little bittersweet, so very sensitive readers/listeners might have a hard time with it, but I do think it's a good book for introducing these messages.

Jackie "the Librarian" says

One spring, two sisters don't go to Annie's house, like they told mom. No, they go into Bluebell Wood, to the *magic* pond that's only there in the spring to fish for newts. But they don't find any newts, they find something *better!*

"He was the size of a frog, only round and blue.
He had boggly eyes and a spiky tail
and I do remember he had ears like a mouse."

They take him home and make him a lovely jar full of shells and fresh water, and feed him cake crumbs. They love him and love him, but because he's a wild thing, Bog Baby doesn't thrive. The girls realize they have to let him go, if they *really* love him.

Impossibly sweet and charming, this book is recommended for everyone.

Kerri Selby says

A lovely, heart warming story.

Lisa Vegan says

I felt skeptical that I'd like this book but my Goodreads' friends Kathryn, Ann, Jackie, and Abigail all rated it highly, so I thought I'd give it a try.

This book is utterly charming in every way.

I absolutely adore the last page, where young readers are encouraged to make notes about any bog baby they might find and are informed that bog babies are extremely rare and how if the reader finds one, how it would be helpful to send information to S.O.B.B. (Save Our Bog Babies). There is a real address to send any information collected. Oh, just too cute.

This story works on a couple different levels. In a serious way, it addresses how wild animals belong in the

wild. It's also a sweet story about two sisters who do what all kids do at some point: tell a lie and do something they're supposed to do, then cover it up, and what the consequences are of that, which luckily (to my mind) are not as harsh as they feared. It's also a wonderful little fantasy story. The story is written lovingly and poetically.

And then there are the illustrations, which are lovely. They're colorful and lush, and beautiful, and at times amusing. I love the way nature is depicted. The bog baby is adorable, which I noticed when I saw the book's cover when I had the book in hand. (On the book's page at the Goodreads' website, I thought the bog baby looked somewhat repulsive, and its name didn't appeal to me. I'm glad I ignored my initial impression and gave the bog baby and this story and book a chance.) I don't know if this was deliberately done, but it seemed to me the art style changed very slightly between pictures that primarily featured the natural world and those that featured people, and I appreciated that.

This is a terrific sister (or friend) story. It can be used as a discussion starter for lessons about wild animals and ecology, and it can definitely be enjoyed as a just for fun book.

4 ½ stars

Peacegal says

Wonderfully cute, retro-tinged illustrations, and a sweet story about how the best place for little wild things is in the wild.

Tanya says

What if wild things are kept in hostage? Will they survive love and care or they need wild environment for their survival? As a small kid what weird things you have kept as pet? I used to bring snails each day and used to put them in pond but every morning they used to vanish. One day I brought 50 small fishes in the hope they will turn into gold fish but they were tadpole and became frog instead. Our pond was full of frog next day and I never knew those fish changed into frog. That was the weirdest thing that I have done till date.

This story also explains you have to let go wild creatures to their environments for their survival. One day Chrissy and I didn't go to Anne's house but went to magic pond for fishing. But we caught something better, a bog baby. He was small and blue like jelly. We put him in a jar and hid him in the shed. He was our bog baby and secret. We fed him on cake crumbs. And our friends loved him. We took great care but still he fall sick and we couldn't tell mom as she would come to know we didn't visit Annie. Bog baby got thinner and hid under his shell. Mum found us in shed and I told her everything. Mum wasn't angry and her eyes got misty. She hadn't seen a bog baby since she was little. Mum said he doesn't belong here and she picked up the bucket and we followed her. We let him go as that was best for him. We never saw him again. Last spring my daughter found the magic pond and saw hundreds of bog babies. That's what she told me and that's what I believe!!

This book is must for all crazy people like is and their wilder pets.

Charlotte & Alexei says

The story follows two young sisters who discover a bog baby in a magic pond in bluebell wood, they take him home in a jam jar and love him as they would a household pet. But the bog baby is a wild thing and even though it can be the hardest thing to do, particularly as a child, in order to love and protect him, the sisters are forced to make a difficult choice and set their bog baby free again.

We loved the bog baby. I can't speak for Alexei on this one but I personally think the bog baby is gorgeous! Gwen Millward's illustrations are a visual delight with a mixture of pencil drawings and delicate paintings, they really capture the character of woodland and nature.

Jo Birt says

When two small sisters go fishing to the magic pond, they find something that they have never seen before. They discover a small, blue creature with wings like a dragon, it is called a bog baby. They decide to keep the creature a secret from their mum and they take it to school to show all of their friends. When she becomes poorly, the girls decide they must tell their mum. And she tells them the greatest lesson: if you really love something, you have to let it go.

This book was used in English in Year 2 for writing a diary entry about when they took the bog baby into school. They describe their feelings and how the children would have felt when the bog baby got sick. This helps the children to feel empathy and put themselves in someone else's shoes.

BrookesEducationLibrary says

I found this picture book so charming, I loved the bog baby! He is gorgeous! Which is really meant as a compliment to the illustrator, the pictures were so beautiful and made me nostalgic for my childhood rambling around the countryside!

The message I took from this book was very much about protecting wildlife in nature, so often you hear about children (and adults) trying to tame wild animals in their home and it rarely works! The moral of this story was the classic 'if you love it, let it go' - I think we all should take a step back from 'helping' our wildlife and let them be as they are meant to be, wild. This is not to say the book discourages children from exploring nature but rather encourages them to learn and experience it for all its wonders without needing to bring it home.

Saying all that, I would really like to have a little bog baby of my own! Maybe in a pond at the end of my garden as opposed to a bucket in the shed.

Definitely recommended.

Emily McKnight says

-Illustrations: collage

Summary/person Response: This is an adventurous and beautiful story of two girls who find a mysterious creature and try to keep it a secret. They tell their mother once they realize they cannot handle it- and must let it free. It tells the lesson for anyone who reads: if you love something you must set it free.
