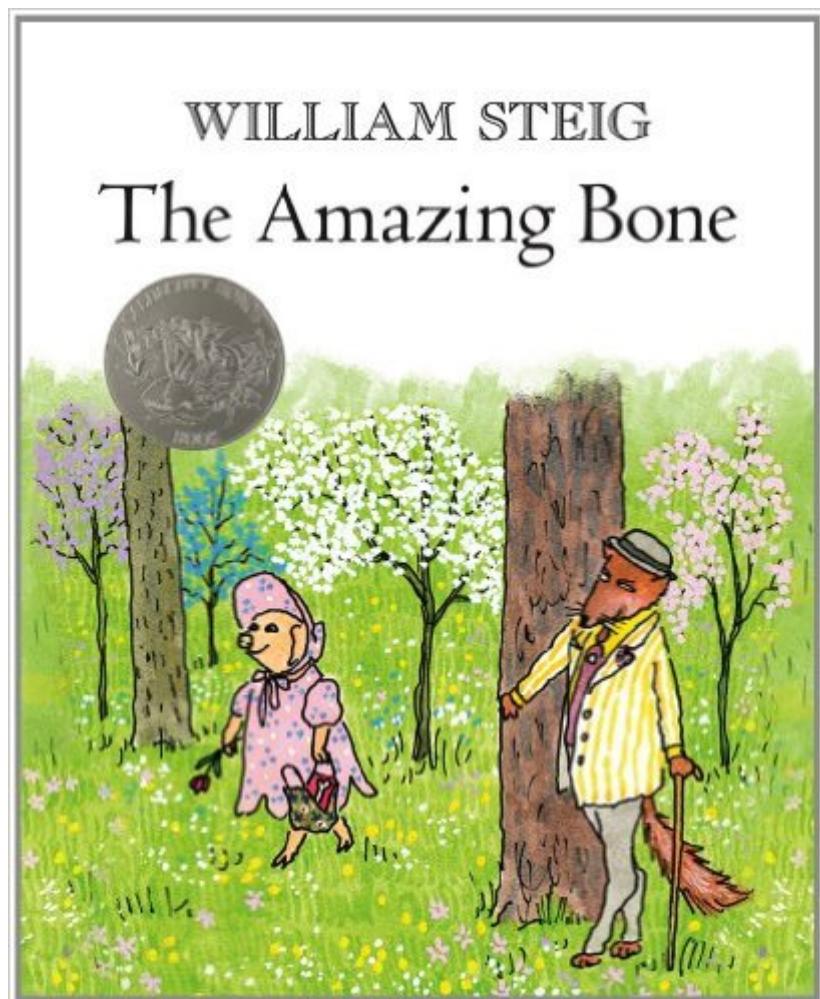


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The Amazing Bone



Synopsis

Can Pearl, a pig, and her new friend, a small talking bone, outwit a band of robbers and a hungry fox? The Amazing Bone is a 1976 New York Times Book Review Notable Children's Book of the Year and Outstanding Book of the Year, a 1977 Caldecott Honor Book, and a 1977 Boston Globe - Horn Book Awards Honor Book for Picture Books.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (59 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 3

Customer Reviews

Before talking generally about the book, let me share my reaction that children who are sensitive and easily develop fears may find this book to be too much for them. Read this book first before reading it to your child. The sections in question have robbers threatening to kill Pearl the Pig and a fox planning to do the same thing prior to eating Pearl. I found both situations a little rougher on the emotions than the standard Little Red Riding Hood fare in this regard. This story was a Caldecott Honor book in 1977 as one of the best illustrated children's stories of that year. The book has many outstanding features. First, the watercolors and ink outlines nicely convey bright, spring colors and create a light mood. Second, the story has a very funny plot device in having a major character be a talking bone. Third, the plot reversals are quite sudden, dramatic, and emotionally laden. This book will make quite an impression on its readers. Fourth, the book raises very nice questions about all kinds of human relations that will keep you and your child talking for years. Pearl the Pig dawdled in

town after school. Her purpose was to watch the grownups doing their work, in order to think about what she might do when she grew up. She watched street cleaners, bakers, and "old guffers" pitching horseshoes. Then she headed home through the forest. Once there, "she could almost feel herself changing into a flower" as she looked at the beautiful scene around her. "I hear something." "So do I," a voice answered. "I'm the bone in the violets near the tree by the rock on your right." "You talk?" "In any language . . ." "And I can imitate any sound there is." "How?" "I don't know. I didn't make the world." The bone reports that it fell out of a witch's basket in August. The bone didn't want to return. "I'd be happier with someone young and lively like you." From out of nowhere, three armed highway robbers wearing masks rushed them, and threatened to shoot Pearl. The bone hissed like a snake and roared like a lion in her purse, and the robbers bolted. Next a fox grabbed her. "You will be my main course tonight." The bone claimed to be a ravenous crocodile, but the fox was not fooled. The fox found the bone and put it in his pocket. Just when the fox is about to do away with Pearl, the bone starts in incantation. The fox starts shrinking! Pearl is saved. "I didn't know you could do magic!" "Neither did I." The words "just came to me." They went home and told Pearl's distraught parents about their adventures. The bone stayed and became part of the family. The bone rested in an honored place on a silver tray on the mantelpiece, except at night. Then, the Pearl took the bone to bed, and they talked and talked. They also sang. The bone always kept the house full of music and sounds, even when the family didn't want them. As you can see, without the extreme threats of violence, this is a very funny and original story. So if your child likes things a little on the scary side, this will be a five star book. If your child is timid on those issues, avoid this book until that changes. I averaged that perception out to four stars, assuming that most children around 6 could handle the threatened violence and the abductions well as fantasy. The benefit, of course, of a story like this one is to open up the subject of what your child should be doing when alone, when in the presence of strangers alone, and how to handle the kind of events that parents don't like to even think about happening. A good way to begin this discussion is to ask your child what Pearl should have done differently. What could the bone have done differently? If the bone were another child, what should the other child have done? And so forth. You get the idea. Would you like to have a talking bone as a friend? Personally, I'd like to find out more about what kind of music the bone likes to make first. What would you like to do when you grow up? Travel to the limits of imagination to find the potential for good in the world around us!

I bought this book based on the fact it was a Caldecott Honorable Mention and based on the reviews. I have to say my son loved the book until we got to the part where robbers in Halloween

masks jump out of the bushes and put a gun to Pearl's head. Hello? You reviewers out there. My son (3, almost 4) was shocked. He asked a zillion questions about the robbers. Weren't they bad? Did they hurt Pearl? Why (how come) they were robbing her? The next day the questions continued. I bought 10 Caldecott books and we were reading the books right out of the box and I failed to preview the story. Big mistake. This book is charming and wonderful except for the robbery scene which is graphic and extremely disturbing. That scene also seems out of place. In my opinion, it does not belong in a children's book. Parents of young children--beware of this book. Adults, enjoy it.

These words are spoken by a fox, one of the villains of this book, to a talking bone, one of the heroes. The bone is not inanimate - it is a sentient creature with feelings and a sweet disposition. There is no doubt that Steig is brilliant, but in *The Amazing Bone* he seems to have lost his bearings. How can a book purportedly written for children include a character that takes pleasure from inflicting pain, and describes it in this graphic way? The fox also menaces Pearl, a darling piglet who is the other protagonist of the book. Her trouble starts, as it might for any child, as follows: "It was a brilliant day, and instead of going straight home from school, Pearl dawdled". As she slowly makes her way home through idyllic scenery, Pearl happens upon the talking bone. "May I take you home with me, wonderful bone?" Pearl asked". But the happy scene is soon interrupted by three masked robbers who put a gun to the head of the innocent child. With the help of the bone Pearl escapes, only to fall into the clutches of the even more sinister fox. The shocking threat of torture follows as the valiant bone tries to rescue its new friend for a second time. "When they arrived at the fox's hideaway, he shoved Pearl into an empty room and locked the door". While there are many such scenes in the Little Red Riding Hood genre of fairy tale, there is something particularly violent and dark in Stieg's portrayal. The image of Pearl cowering on the floor of the locked room awaiting her fate is disturbing to the extreme. Notwithstanding a happy ending it's clear that this book can't be recommended for children, and that it isn't intended for adults. This being the case it is surprising that in 1977 it was recognized by the American Library Association as a Caldecott Honor Book. Certainly Steig's artful and evocative illustrations are remarkable, but should not have been sufficient, in and of themselves, for the conferring of this prestigious award.

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