The Lonely Book by K. Bernheimer

Robert Desmarais

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Abstract

This charming story about a well-loved book will not easily be forgotten. It’s the sort of picture book I would have loved to discover during my childhood visits to the public library. The tale begins in a classic fairytale style, “Once there was a brand-new book that arrived at the library.” As the story unfolds, young readers learn all sorts of details about the inner workings of a public library, including the custom that many of the newest books are placed on a special shelf in a high traffic area.

The “lonely book” of this story initially had a popular and fulfilling life on the new book shelf but eventually it is relegated to the children’s section, along with countless other well-loved titles. Years pass, the book becomes a little tattered and worn, and is now checked out all too infrequently. Then, one morning, a little girl named Alice discovers it and falls in love with the story about the girl and her life under a toadstool, and so she takes it home. “The book had never felt so beloved.” Readers will discover how lonely it becomes when Alice forgets to renew her old book, and especially so when it begins a new life in the library’s storage basement. In time, Alice longs for her favourite book and despairs that she may never see it again. The story ends on a cheerful note, however, when Alice is reunited with her once cherished book at the library’s big book sale.

For those of us who understand what it is like to cherish a book from our childhood, this book will bring back fond memories. The soft watercolour illustrations complement the story beautifully and they evoke a magical time when children fall in love with books, read them late into the night, fall asleep with them under their pillows, and dream sweet dreams about favourite characters and events.

Highly recommended: 4 out of 4 stars
Reviewer: Robert Desmarais

Robert Desmarais is Head of Special Collections at the University of Alberta and Managing Editor of The Deakin Review of Children’s Literature. A graduate of the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Information Studies, with a Book History and Print Culture designation, he also has university degrees in English literature and publishing. He has been collecting and enjoying children’s books for as long as he can remember.

Author Biography
Robert Desmarais
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Her most recent book for children is "The Lonely Book," illustrated by Chris Sheban and an Amazon.com "Best Books of the Month" selection for May 2012; it was published in April 2012 by Random House Children's Books. Bernheimer is founder and editor of the journal Fairy Tale Review,[3] as well as a number of fairy-tale anthologies, including Mirror, Mirror on the Wall (Doubleday, 2002)[4] and Brothers and Beasts (Wayne State University Press, 2007). Bernheimer was also among a list of contributors to The &NOW Awards 2: The Best Innovative Writing which released in spring of 2013.[5]. She has a BA from Wesleyan University.[6]. References[edit].