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Picnic

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

A picture book from John Burningham is now a rare event and, I suppose, might be judged with the classics of the past in mind: something that the publishers are inclined to encourage when they claim that it is 'in the grand tradition of Mr Gumpy's Outing'. Well, put that to one side, if you can, and look at it as if meeting it, and Burningham, for the first time. What might you find? First, its perfect simplicity: a boy and a girl go on a picnic; they invite three animals to share it; they are chased by a bull; they lose some things and find them again; and they eat their picnic and go home tired to bed. During the story, the reader is invited to help find duck's lost scarf or pig's ball, and it is not hard at all. There is no puzzle, only a gentle sharing. The colours glow, children and animals are *perfectly* (what other word is there) realised. Nothing is laboured; nothing draws undue attention to itself. It flows effortlessly, with viewpoint, technique and spare prose entirely in the service of the story. Of course, it is a book by a master of his art, but, most important, each illustration is a joy and everything is as it should be in a book to share with the youngest child.

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