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Bog Child



Synopsis

DIGGING FOR PEAT in the mountain with his Uncle Tally, Fergus finds the body of a child, and it looks like she's been murdered. As Fergus tries to make sense of the mad world around him his brother on hunger-strike in prison, his growing feelings for Cora, his parents arguing over the Troubles, and him in it up to the neck, blackmailed into acting as courier to God knows what a little voice comes to him in his dreams, and the mystery of the bog child unfurls. Bog Child is an astonishing novel exploring the sacrifices made in the name of peace, and the unflinching strength of the human spirit. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 9 Up • It is 1981, and 18-year-old Fergus lives on the border between Northern Ireland and the south. His older brother, Joe, a member of the Provisional IRA, is jailed at Long Kesh and joins a hunger strike. The family is traumatized, and Fergus does his best to comfort his mother and to convince Joe that his "sacrifice" for the cause is not worth it. Fergus has been pressured (blackmailed) to smuggle packages for the IRA, but wants nothing more than to leave Ireland and study to become a doctor. His life becomes even more complicated when he and his uncle discover the body of a young girl while pilfering peat. It turns out to be 2000 years old. Thus begins a double narrative that involves a love story and a discussion of destiny and self-sacrifice.

Fergus's story includes his struggle to understand his brother's actions and his growing love for the daughter of the archaeologist called in to investigate the Iron Age discovery. Interspersed is the story of Mel, the bog child, who makes the ultimate sacrifice to unite her people, and who finds love at the end of her life. The two narratives work beautifully together. The love story between Fergus and Cora is depicted with tenderness, and their adolescent sexuality is sensitively portrayed. Readers will come away with a strong sense of the time periods (especially of the "Troubles") through dialogue and action. This compelling read is lyrically written and contains authentic dialogue and challenging and involving moral issues. It's a first, and a must-have purchase. — Jennifer Ralston, Harford County Public Library, Belcamp, MD Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

Starred Review While cutting peat in the Irish hills, Fergus McCann and his uncle discover a body preserved by the bog. Archaeologists and politicians fight over the find, while Fergus starts to dream about the past of the bog child he names Mel. Dowd slowly reveals the story of Mel's mysterious death, an apparent murder, amid the 1980s troubles of Northern Ireland and the hunger strike of the Long Kesh political prisoners. Fergus's imprisoned older brother joins the strike as Fergus is blackmailed into delivering packages that may contain bomb-making supplies. The history, which will likely be as unfamiliar to American teen readers as the story's dialect, may need fleshing out with additional sources, but the intriguing characters and their motivations and sacrifices will translate directly to contemporary readers. The plotlines are braided together into a strong story that is rich in language, setting, and theme. Fans of David Almond's work will savor the similar religious influences and the elements of magical realism. A budding romance with the archaeologist's daughter, exuberant Cora, will delight readers, who will wonder, as Fergus does after his first kisses, "Why wasn't the whole world doing this all the time, why?" — Grades 8-11. --Cindy Dobrez --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

I read this book once before, when it was first published. I enjoyed the re-read even more as I have in the meantime visit Ireland/Northern Ireland, and read a number of non-fiction books regarding the troubles and the hunger strikers and taken several online courses on the subject. Even with the extra knowledge, I found the book to be a good way for people who are unfamiliar with the background to learn about this time in modern Irish history. Well done, Siobhan Dowd.

A good story of the time of the "troubles" in Ireland -- back in the early 90's.

"Bog Child" is one of those rare books that seem to speak to you from the bookshelf. I came across it at Borders and it jumped out at me in the Young Adult section, so different was it from its contemporaries. I highly recommend this work by Siobhan Dowd, a masterful storyteller. The other reviews here give a good description as to what to expect when reading the book but for all of those who love to read YA, really good YA, this is the book for you. Historical fiction set in the time of the Irish "troubles" from a youth's perspective is hard to find. Although the book is also about an archeological discovery and a spiritual link between the main character and the "bog child," the book centers on the main character and how he finds himself swept up in events beyond his control. Like the "bog child" he so sympathizes with, he feels both betrayed and vindicated by the events around him. He maintains an outsider's perspective and gives a clear idea of what life was like during this time period. The book has an unfinished feel to it making me want to go with the main character at the end, to see where he ends up and if he makes good on his promises. I highly recommend this book to YA lovers and to anyone who is traveling to Ireland and is interested in a brief introduction to this time period.

A wonderful, well written, captivating story. I came across this book in my research regarding a planned trip to Ireland this summer. I purchased it for my 15 year old son. It was already highly acclaimed, and I thought it might provide my son with some sense of life in Ireland for a young man, and also a sense of what life was like during the Northern Ireland conflicts. I ended up reading it myself, didn't want to put it down, but didn't want to finish it either! A great story, and I highly recommend.

The story of a bog body, discovered in a peat bog in Ireland, is cleverly interwoven with the story of 18-year-old Fergus, who desperately wants to get away from the horrors of his small town in Northern Ireland during "the Troubles." Very well written.

Poignant. I enjoyed reading this book immensely. Anyone interested in Irish history, YA literature should read this book!! A must read.

An amazing book. I couldn't put it down. I have recommended it to my friends.

Book arrived promptly and as described. Would order again.

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