



The Crow-Girl: The Children of Crow Cove

Bodil Bredsdorff, Faith Ingwersen (Translator)

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A timeless novel about the kindness of strangers

Near a little cove where a brook runs out to the sea live a girl and her grandmother. All alone with no neighbors at all, the two lead a peaceful existence. They have a house, dine on sea kale and mussels and sand snails, and build fires from driftwood. But the grandmother is very old. When the time comes that the girl must bury the woman, she makes up a funeral song about the birds she is watching: Two crows never fly alone, and death is never, ever past. The next day the same crows seem to beckon her, and so the Crow-Girl begins her journey, one in which she will meet people both warm and cold, hurt and hurtful. And the Crow-Girl, before she knows it, has the makings before her of a new family . . .

This lyrical story, with its characters' moments of darkness always overcome through incredible humanity, introduces a strong new voice for American readers.

The Crow-Girl: The Children of Crow Cove Details

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Author : Bodil Bredsdorff , Faith Ingwersen (Translator)

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From Reader Review The Crow-Girl: The Children of Crow Cove for online ebook

Melody says

Simply lovely fable-type story of a young girl who makes her way alone in the world, through perils and trials, gaining wisdom and love along the way. It can be read as a parable about love and family, and how one must make choices for the good of the group sometimes...

As Darsa said, it undoubtedly loses something in the translation, but the simplicity of the prose resonates with the straightforward loveliness of the message. It's the kind of book that leaves one smiling, warm and hopeful. It's got a happy ending that one can believe.

K. says

Another KEEPER!

Beautiful language and story.

Just before she dies, Crow-girl's grandma gives her three rules for life.

- 1) "You will find two kinds of people in the world. Some say there are the bad and the good. But it isn't like that. Since what is good for one may be bad for another. No, that doesn't work. You have to depend on your intuition. There are those who make you feel inside as if you are drinking a good, warm soup--even if you are hungry and the two of you have nothing to eat. In spite of that they nourish you. And then there are those who cause you to freeze inside, even if you are sitting before a roaring fire and have eaten your fill. Those you should keep away from. They are not good for you, even though others might say they are good people."
- 2) "The second rule says that the door to a person's heart can only be opened from within. If there is someone who will not let you in, it's no use hammering and kicking and lamenting and complaining. For what if the door is ajar, and you push it shut? With some people it can never be opened again."
- 3) "There is the third and most important rule. It's about a person's need to continue wishing and hoping, for then, at last, you will get what was wished and hoped for--even if it is in a completely different way from what you imagined."

Of course the story follows these rules as it follows Crow-girl and it's beautiful. For sure it's one for the list.

Mary Hoch says

This story takes place near a quiet cove, where 3 small houses sit, 2 of which are empty. In the only occupied house lives a young girl and her sick grandmother. Following her grandmother's passing and as a result of her loneliness and desperation, the girl leaves her home. She meets a woman, who takes her in and feeds her, but then treats her as a slave; and when she discovers the woman's intention of taking her home, she leaves.

She lets the crows lead her on her journey, where she encounters a little boy, whose father is filled with sadness and asks the Crow-Girl to take him with her. Then they meet Foula and her daughter Eidi, who join them on their journey, which they decide will take them back to the cove. They meet Rossan, who offers them a place to stay and rest and work in exchange for his sheep. Eventually, the group makes their way back to the Crow-Girl's home at the cove, only to find the house robbed of all its belongings. The little boy's father and oldest son make their way to them and together they begin a new life for themselves as a family.

The Crow-Girl was originally published in Danish in 1993 and later translated to English in 2004. This is a warm, touching story of courage and perseverance and a young girl finding her way in the world. It is appropriate for grades 4 through 6. Themes included in this novel are: family, perseverance, and the sea. With the protagonist being a female, this story would appeal mostly to female students.

Jaime says

The Crow-Girl is a part of an award-winning series. It is about a young girl who lives by the sea with her grandmother. Her grandmother is very old and ill and eventually passes away, but not without imparting special "rules" one should follow in life.

1. "There are two types of people in the world....There are those who make you feel inside as if you are drinking a good, warm soup....And then there are those who cause you to freeze inside..."
2. "The door of someone's heart can only be opened from within"
3. "...the third, most important rule. It's about a person's need to continue wishing and hoping, for then, at last, you will get what was wished and hoped for..."

The orphaned girl in the story takes these bits of valuable advice from her late grandmother as she begins her journey by following a pair of crows, hence the name of the book. The crows take her through a variety of villages and towns where she meets a plethora of people, both warm and cold, and even takes some of them under her wing to create a new family for herself. The people in her new family have all endured some sort of hardship like Crow-Girl and they support each other through tough times.

I would recommend using this text as a whole-class book read in 4th or 5th grade. It may be a bit difficult to read for some because it is slightly melancholy and not jam packed with action like some book. Symbolism is used persistently throughout the book, but it doesn't distract from the story at all. This would be a fabulous read to introduce symbolism to young students as the symbolism is obvious enough to sensibly explain. The book also contains a wonderful theme of trusting one's gut instinct. This could make for a widely relateable discussion among students in small reading groups. Overall, the book is warm and inviting and, generally, celebrates the courage that hides inside of the human spirit.

The Crow-Girl was written by Bodil Bredsdorff in Holland originally. It was then translated to English by Faith Ingwersen. The Crow-Girl has received the ALAN-ALA Notable Books for Children award, the Beacon award, it was a School Library Journal Best Book of the Year, and was a Mildred L. Batchelder award Nominee in 2005. It was also received the Parent's Choice award in 2004.

Margaret says

Batchelder Honor 2005

The Crow-Girl is about an unnamed girl who lives with her grandmother. The grandmother warns the girl that she will die soon and how to know when that happens. She then tells her that people have both good and bad inside and you have to see if it is the right goodness for you. When her grandmother dies, the girl sets out. She first finds a woman who wants her to work for her and then wants to take all her things, but she escapes one night. Then, she finds a man and a toddler. The man tells her to take the toddler, Doup, because he is too distraught by his wife's death to take care of him. She sets off again and meets a woman and her daughter who were abused by the woman's second husband. They are headed back to the Crow-girl's house when they meet a man who takes care of them for the winter and gives them sheep when they leave. The group gets to the Crow-girl's house and finds it has been ransacked. They settle in and Doup's father and older brother find them and stay with them too.

This book would be good for grades 3-6. It would be a good book to use for discussions about family and how different families can be. This book is the first of a series. So it could be used and then predictions made and the later books could be read too.

The story would probably appeal mostly to girls, but there are later ones that could be of more interest to boys.

Caren says

This story feels very old, almost like a saga. It was translated from Danish and takes place along the coast of Denmark. It is the coming-of-age journey of "Crow-Girl", a name given her by a not very nice person after the girl realizes that her beloved and now dead grandmother only ever called her "Chick". That frail grandmother, with whom Crow-Girl lived in an isolated setting by the sea, tried to prepare her for life on her own, and indeed, Crow-Girl was very resourceful. After burying her grandmother (by means of forming a sort of rock cairn), she left her cottage, following a pair of crows. The book is about the people, good and bad, she met along the way. Thank goodness her story ends happily, as she encountered some unbearably sad people and incidents. Still, good always prevails and all of the characters persevere. I suppose you could say the book is a meditation on life. It is certainly beautifully written and thought-provoking.

(*Thanks to fellow Goodreads friend, "Canadian Reader", for suggesting to me this lovely little book.)

Kathryn says

This lovely story is the first of popular Danish author Bodil Bresdorff's to be translated in to English and printed in America. Lucky us! I really enjoy reading about other cultures--and the underlying humanity that is so very much the same no matter what--and this book delivers.

I was actually surprised by how somber much of the story is. I expected that, after the (expected) grandmother's death, things would improve for the Crow-Girl. But, her journey is filled with as many nasty snags and sorrowful times as it is with rewards and happiness. I wasn't as emotionally touched as I expected to be, which is perhaps a good thing as otherwise I might not have wanted to finish it given the fair share of

tears poor Crow-Girl must shed, but I was still won over by the story in its gentle wisdom. As a rule, I love the theme of children who show that they can be self-reliant, though of course it is sweetest when the joys and pains in life are divided up among friends and family--I think there is also something very attractive about this for young readers, too. In our own day and age, what child could take care of her own home, keep the fire going, find and prepare food, etc? How mesmerizing are all these mundane toils when a comrade of childhood is able to do them! I also really appreciated the "lesson" that the good and bad are mixed together in life and that sorrow may give birth to great joy. I thought it was very sweet about the two crows (I won't say more as it's a bit of a spoiler!) and I also thought the ending was fitting, not cloyingly sweet or impossibly "happy ever after" but still showing that perseverance and kindness bring rewards.

I hesitate to recommend this to sensitive readers. I usually don't like to read books about death, but as I said this one didn't quite grab me so I was able to cope just fine. However, children especially may be troubled by the grandmother's death and by the death of a few animals, as well.

I'm not sure that I liked this enough to want to read the sequel (Eidi: The Children of Crow Cove) but I am most certainly very glad to have been introduced to this author.

Beverly says

A sweet, quiet story of an orphaned girl who finds her way in the world and a new family. The writing is simple but elegant, and the story moves along at a good pace. The characters are well-rounded. At first, I thought that the author must hate men, because of the wicked stepfather and the man who abandoned his young son to a stranger (the Crow Girl). Fortunately she was a good person and cared for the little boy. I don't know if Norwegians are weak people or what, but I thought that this father should have pulled himself together emotionally for the sake of his young son, instead of wallowing in anger and self-pity. But then she introduced Rossan, a good and helpful man; and finally Frid, over his temporary madness, came looking for his son again. For balance, there is one wicked woman who stole all of Crow Girl's belongings. But Crow Girl survives all the problems life throws at her and grows stronger in the process.

Manybooks says

Now what I have (during both of my listed reads) probably most lastingly, most intensely enjoyed and appreciated with regard to Bodil Bredsdorff's evocative and emotionally dense The Crow Girl is the author's (and by extension for this here English language edition, of course also translator Faith Ingewersen's) caressing, almost entrancing style of textual expression, as the rhythm and cadence of the narrative strongly reminds one of ocean waves and tides, not really all that surprising in and of itself, as for all intents and purposes The Crow Girl is thematically (but really also linguistically and textually) a novel of the sea and by the sea (and yes indeed, there concurrently also exists an equal and very much pleasantly surprising sense of sweet appreciation and awe that a translated text can feel so immediate, as especially a sense of both stylistic and thematic authenticity can sometimes and perhaps even rather often be lacking with translations, in particular with less simple, more nuanced writing, such as The Crow Girl presents).

And furthermore, although the thematics presented and depicted with and in The Crow Girl are often rather dismal and even depressing, there is (at least to and for me) always a never ceasing background noise of at least possible joy, of calmness, serenity and grace, even under the most dire circumstances (and these tragic or likely tragic scenarios, they do definitely exist in The Crow Girl, and at times even massively so, from the grandmother's death, to the Crow Girl being forced to make her own way, to Frid's loss of sanity at the death of his wife), as floating and flowing above the depicted and palpable anguish, there seems to always and at the same time be hope and a sense of courage (the guiding crows, which to me represent the spirits of the Crow Girl's deceased grandparents, meeting Rossan, and even the fact that the Crow Girl comes across Frid in his despair and is able to rescue Doup from his father's grief induced frenzied madness).

Now from a more philosophical point of view, the grandmother's Weltanschauung of personally choosing one's family, alongside of the concept that some individuals are good and beneficial to and for you whilst others are bad and even very much extremely and permanently so (and that these individuals might indeed be one's biological family, that they can therefore also be people everyone seems to consider as being praiseworthy, blameless and positive), this really does speak (and always will speak) to me both loudly and clearly. For instance, while I do not actually consider that the grandmother or the never met (but lovingly remembered) grandfather are necessarily or perhaps even likely the Crow Girl's biological grandparents, the three of them are obviously much more of a true and loving family unit than ANY other family shown in The Crow Girl (just look at Eidi's mother staying so long with her vicious brute of a husband, and Doup's father is obviously totally unfit for his role as caregiver, at least in his current and dangerously despairing state of mind).

However and that all being said, I am also very much of the personal opinion (and unlike many other reviewers, it seems) that Frid most definitely and fortunately does the only reasonable, and yes indeed, the only possible (and caring) point of action when he tells the Crow Girl to take Doup along with her when she leaves. For after Frid's frenzied destruction of his domicile (which I actually can both understand and even appreciate, as grief can make one do unreasonable and sometimes even violent things), it is abundantly clear that Doup is much better off with the Crow Girl (at least at present). And I also and certainly do not see Doup's father as in any manner an inherently abusive or problematic individual (unlike Eidi's stepfather, who is depicted as just plain and utterly nasty). To me, it has always been rather obvious that Frid is simply someone so overcome with and by grief and guilt at the death of his wife that he is basically losing his mind and is in no way capable of taking care of either himself or his son (and I do think one major theme in both The Crow Girl and its sequels is taking away the proverbial rose-coloured glasses many people seem to wear with regard to the so-called "good old days" and to realise that not so very long ago, there were no social agencies, no child care authorities and if a wife, a mother, a grandmother died, life could become intolerable and perhaps even dangerous for those left behind). And thus, in my opinion, it would have been much and exceedingly worse for Doup if Frid had not asked Myna (the Crow Girl) to take him along (as he obviously realised that he could not adequately care for his son at present, and therefore giving him to Myna is not an act of parental neglect but instead a truly necessary, a loving and kind gesture and action). Also, when you consider Myna's own isolation when she was living with her grandmother, you then realise that while she is perhaps only a young girl herself, she is also very mature and capable for her age (out of simple necessity). And considering how isolated Frid and Doup are, there is likely no alternative but Myna (for as mentioned above, there are likely no social programs, no child care organisations, except perhaps poor houses and work houses in the larger cities, not an appropriate alternative for either Myna or Doup).

Karol says

I loved every word of this story - it seems that the translation into English has been extremely well done. It is a story of hope and perseverance in a time of great hardship and pain. The young girl's perseverance and hope help her overcome one obstacle after another until finally her hopes and wishes are fulfilled.

The book starts with three life lessons passed down from a grandmother to her granddaughter, and then we see each one played out in the story that follows. It is more than a story of survival - in essence, it's a story about overcoming.

The crows in the story add a fascinating and magical touch. The people whom the crow girl meets who are good on the inside truly warm the reader's heart, while the ones who may appear to be good on the outside (but who are in fact nasty and shallow on the inside) will make your heart ice cold.

I'd recommend this book to children at about 10 years of age (maybe a bit younger if they are able to handle things that would be hard for sensitive kids). There's a lot of bad at the beginning, but I think the characters draw you in, and at the end it is very much a "feel good" heart-warming story.

Chrissie says

This YA book did not work for me. There was a lot of talk about the Crow-Girl books by the Norwegian author Bodil Bredsdorff in the Comfort Reads Group of which I am a member here at GR. There is an overall gloom that I did not enjoy. I am NOT one to shy away from a book that focuses on "difficult times". It is not enough for me that a story ends on a positive note. No, I even prefer a novel that ends half-way happy as long as the passage through the book isn't dismal and provides a chuckle or a smile curls my lips. I think this is essential for a child's book. I want them to see that even at bad times it is possible to find something good around you if you take the time to find it.

The main character, Crow-Girl, was always ever so righteous! Most of the adults she encountered were so unbelievably nasty. I found these NASTY people heartbreaking! I simply could not deal with the depressing nastiness! Remember this is a child's book Why is it that I can stomach evil behaviour when I read history, but not when I read fiction? I think it is b/c in fiction an author chooses how he will portray a character. The author can make them human, with good and bad qualities OR so wicked that the reader cringes at all contact with these bad-doers. In this case it was the latter, and the brunt of all this evil was children. I know that most fairy tales for children follow a pattern where good conquers evil. So maybe I am wrong, but I was very uncomfortable reading this book! And the characters felt too black or white.

Think about it – how often do you become close to the evil personages of history? Usually there is a distance between you and them! Here, in this novel, they were too close for comfort. I can only give this book two stars.

I should add that some adults did manage to straighten themselves out. Consistently children were the ones to suffer from the behaviour of mixed-up or mean adults.

BEFORE READING:

I must be crazy to add another kids book, I have so many sitting around, but actually it is me that will read it first. I was enchanted by the text snippet I read. I like the grandmother's no nonsense advice to follow one's

intuition. So yes I have added this to my highest priority shelf, the wishlist. Gundula thank you for shoving me a bit.

Anne Slater says

Did you ever pick a book for the cover and title and actually find a treasure? This is one of those books, originally published in Denmark, and only translated and published in the US in 2004.

Crow-Girl lives a meager but happy life with her very elderly grandmother on a distant cove of a Scandinavian country on the east side(I'm guessing) of the North Sea.

At the outset, grandmother, dying, is teaching Crow-Girl the three great lessons of life. Her final one: "There are two kinds of people... There are those who make you feel inside as if you are drinking a good, warm soup--even if you are hungry and the two of you have nothing to eat. In spite of that they nourish you.

And then there are those who cause you to freeze inside, even if you are sitting before a roaring fire and have eaten your fill. Those you should keep away from. They are not good for you, even though others might say they are good people. Remember that, my chick."

This is the gently told story of Crow-Girl's adventures after her grandmother's death, of the nourishing and freezing people she encounters.

Pure delight.

Lisa Vegan says

This is a lovely little story; it almost feels like a philosophy book, and it's very poetically told. There are some deep messages here that are given as a genuine part of the story, and they're very meaningful. While I can't read it in its original Danish, the translation seems to be excellent.

Thank goodness for some joy toward the end. It is a kids' book so I was expecting it. Most of the book was dismally grim though. It was bone chillingly depressing for quite a long time, and I think it would be too sad for many readers. I guess the long end makes up for the even longer beginning; it is very sweet.

I felt lonely reading it, as I did with books such as Island of the Blue Dolphins when I was a kid.

The Crow-Girl goes through so much misery. But I appreciate her self-reliance, the way she was attuned to nature, and her bravery and generosity and perseverance.

I did think quite a bit how awful (to me) those dwellings would have smelled. But dead animal carcasses don't in any way appeal to me.

So, I'm left wondering: Are crows highly symbolic in the Danish culture?

I ended up enjoying it and it was a very fast read so I didn't have to spend too much time in emotional pain,

but I'm not sure if I have enough interest to try to read other books in this series.

There is a map at the beginning of the book, which I loved because I so enjoy maps in books, even those such as this that cover a very small area.

I read this for the Children's Books group's September selection for its International Book Club.

Karen says

The story of a pure heart. Crow-Girl goes searching for companionship after her grandmother's death, and finds it by trial and error, but also by listening in her heart to the tenets of "truth" her grandmother imparted to her before she died. Hopeful, but not saccharine. Lovely and simple, like a parable.

Emily says

Summary(CIP): after the death of her grandmother, an orphaned young girl leaves her house by the cove and begins a journey which leads her to people and experiences that exemplify the wisdom her grandmother had shared with her.

Review: This story is a great survival story in so many ways. It deals with both physical and emotional survival. The advice given by the grandmother is honest and rings true and then is reflected in the story. The Crow-girl learns that people are neither good or bad, what is good for one is bad for another. The other lesson she learns from her grandmother is so beautifully worded I can not summarize and will include it here, "the door to a person's heart can only be opened from within. If there is someone who will not let you in, it's no use hammering and kicking and lamenting and complaining. For what if the door is ajar and you push it shut? With some people it can never be opened again." The Crow-girl applies these rules and rebuilds her home and her family.

Positive review in SLJ, "Touching on universal themes, this quiet adventure story has the depth and flavor of a tale from long ago and far away." Starred Booklist review.
