



The Children of Lir

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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The Children of Lir is one of the best known of Irish traditional stories, although its origins are hazy and may not be any earlier than the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, it has many of the ingredients of grand drama and is symbolic of the passing of the old Ireland into the new. King Lir loved the wife who gave him his three sons and one daughter, but when she died he married, Aoife, her sister, to give the children a mother. Driven by jealousy, Aoife casts a spell on the children, turning them into swans, in which state they must stay for nine hundred years. In a slight moment of remorse, Aoife grants the children the gift of singing sweetly with their own voices. The swan children's travails on the cold, storm-tossed seas where they are condemned to spend time are described, as is their father's grief, alleviated only by the beauty of their song. Eventually they land at the lake where they spend their last years in the company of a hermit, a bringer of the new faith, until their death whereupon they are transformed into four very old people. This version of **The Children of Lir** sticks reasonably well to the 'received' versions and takes no undue liberties with the story. Both the English and Irish text is written to be read aloud, and this is a story which children are more likely to enjoy hearing than reading. Mayo's illustrations are colourful and well-executed and again follow the style of earlier versions of the tale. The Irish text is slightly simpler than the English, and would be suitable for learners of the language.

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