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Fire Pony

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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At a time when so many young people's books seem unnecessarily long, it is good to encounter one where, in spite of the author's well-trimmed narrative and pared-down style, there is no loss of depth or resonance. Such a book is Philbrick's *Fire Pony*, a totally engaging and often very touching American story of the specially close relationship between two half-brothers, teenagers Roy and Joe. When we first meet them they are in the process of leaving behind unhappy memories of a foster home and hoping to find some temporary employment at a ranch where their expertise with horses will be valued and where they will have the chance to forget the past, especially Joe's history of a dangerous attraction to fire. Their experiences at the ranch, their gradual integration into its small community and, above all, Roy's emergence as a highly skilled horseman, provide the material for the remainder of Philbrick's expertly paced story. The world of the ranch is a warm, protective place – the only villain, Mullins, is a rather two-dimensional character – but also a place which ‘goes all to pieces just when you least expect it’. There are some marvellously dramatic scenes, including an outstanding episode when a mountain lion breaks into the horses' corral, and, best of all, a denouement featuring the fire which throughout the narrative has ‘burned inside’ Joe. With its echoes of various timeless American ‘cowboy’ stories, this is a novel with all the makings of a ‘classic’ in its own right. RD

Running Order:

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