



Loving Spirit

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Ellie Carrington is a 14-year-old whose parents die. She is forced to abandon her beloved home in New Zealand for a new life in Derbyshire with her paternal uncle Len who is harsh and unloving. Ellie hates her new home and resents being asked to ride the show ponies in her uncle's stables.

Ellie's only friend is her 16-year-old cousin Joe. The pair play truant to attend a horse fair where Ellie encounters a horse with which she strikes up an immediate bond. Much to her uncle's irritation she buys the horse but it is to be prepared for sale within six weeks. Ellie, of course, has no intention whatever of letting the horse go. She calls him Spirit and finds that he has a surprising ability: he can transmit pictures from his mind to hers to which she can respond.

In books in which horses play a central role, the human characters are often stereotypically depicted ? the good people love horses, the bad ones exploit and abuse them. However, in this book the relationships between the human protagonists take centre stage and the horse serves to emphasise and define those relationships rather than to dominate them.

The telepathic exchanges between horse and human are a compelling device but the transfer of images between human and horse just happens, without any attempt at explanation. Against a realistic narrative background, the phenomenon jars. However this book works because the emotional bond between horse and human is powerfully and convincingly rendered. Traditionally horse and pony stories have been aimed at girls and this new title will do little to close the gender gap. I can't imagine many boys being attracted by a book with such a touching equine portrait on its cover.

Running Order:

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