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The Story of Antigone

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

First published in hardback in 2013, this is one in a series of retellings from Pushkin Children's Books in which contemporary international authors tackle classic tales, both ancient and relatively modern, including **Crime and Punishment** and **The Epic of Gilgamesh**. Ali Smith's take on the tragedy of Antigone is told through the cynical eyes of a crow. With her mind on the fresh pickings it provides, the crow is surveying the battlefield on which Antigone discovers the body of her brother, Polynices, denounced by King Creon as a traitor. Antigone, in defiance of the king and facing the prospect of certain death, performs the burial rites on Polynices' corpse and the crow watches as Antigone is brought before Creon and her fate is decided. Smith's retelling cleverly retains the shape of Sophocles' play, with the crow standing in for the theatre audience, and adds a conversation between the crow and a dog as a prologue to the main action in which the background to the confrontation is filled in for the reader. The Greek chorus, too, appears, adding a commentary in verse, sometimes collapsing into doggerel, and providing incidental humour as their language unravels from elaborate sycophancy to disjointed horror as the final tragedy unfolds. It's a brilliant balancing act. Told in modern colloquial speech, it respects the atmosphere and concerns of the original and in a postscript conversation between the crow and the author, refers the reader back to the play itself. Accompanied by stylish and sympathetic illustrations from Laura Paoletti, it is a fine work in its own right, for either young people or adults, and an excellent introduction to the play.

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