



# Clover Moon

Books Reviewed:

[Clover Moon](#) [1]

Issue:

[221](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Rebecca Butler](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Clover Moon is a girl of eleven, the oldest of seven siblings and half-siblings, living in poverty in Victorian London. Her mother having died when she was little, she lives with her father and her abusive stepmother Mildred, who has brought her own five children to the family home. The burden of looking after the younger children falls largely on Clover.

Clover has two friends. One, Godfrey Arthur Fisher, is a maker of dolls and is commonly known as Mr Dolly. Having scoliosis, he is referred to in this period as a hunchback and is often mocked for his impairment. Clover's second friend is Jimmy Wheels, who is referred to as 'a cripple'. He would use a wheelchair if his family could afford one. In lieu of that he uses a kind of skateboard fashioned for him by Mr Dolly. Clover claims he is 'as sharp as a tack'. Clover looks after a baby who is discovered to be suffering from scarlet fever. Mildred is so apprehensive that Clover might catch the disease and infect the other children that she locks her away in a cupboard. As it transpires, Clover does not catch the disease but her only full sister Megs does catch it and dies. Clover decides she has no future with Mildred and her father, so she runs away.

The narrative now poses the questions what kind of life Clover can fashion for herself and what her future will hold. It goes almost without saying that the narrative unfolds with expert skill in the hands of this masterly story-teller. Mildred's abuse of Clover is not revealed in a sudden blinding moment. It is revealed step by painful step, rendered all the more convincing for that.

As a fictional character Clover is well able to seize and inspire the attention and respect of a modern readership. If any young reader thinks that the predicament of a poverty-stricken girl in Victorian London is too remote from her own interests to command attention, she should think again. There are three characters in Wilson's book who have disabilities, Mr Dolly, Jimmy Wheels and a later character Mary Anne, who has epilepsy. It would have been easy to depict these characters as victims imprisoned by the social prejudices of their times. Instead they are strong, independent and influential characters in their own right.

**Links:**

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/clover-moon>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/221>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/rebecca-butler>