



Once Upon a Wild Wood

Books Reviewed:

[Once Upon a Wild Wood](#) [1]

Issue:

[232](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Ferelith Hordon](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

'Once upon a time....?' and a door opens through which the reader ? or listener - steps into a world that will often be both familiar and strange. This is what happens in this new picture book from the pen of Chris Riddell ? literally. The clever cover design with its cut-out through which we can see Little Green Cape book in hand, standing in a doorway stepping out to adventure inviting us to join her; we cannot resist. We know we are entering a fairy tale ? the title alerts us and we see surrounding our path into the wood familiar faces; three pigs, perhaps a wolf ... seven dwarves. Young readers will be delighted in making the connections and will feel a pleasant sense of familiarity.

Little Green Cape is off to a party ? Rapunzel's party. Like all fairytale questers she takes some useful items ? a stick, a bag of breadcrumbs, a book among others. She will meet a variety of characters on the way. Will she come to harm? This is not a story of great jeopardy and danger, though there is a moment of crisis. Rather it is a story full of humour and fun. Little Green Cape is not only sensible and polite, she is resourceful and helpful ? and the conclusion of her journey is a riotous dance.

Riddell is not just a master of line and colour, here very much on display, but also of the layered narrative. We are introduced to characters and events in neat vignettes adding movement and incident while the full page illustrations are framed as pictures subtly reminding the reader that we are in a picture book world. There are details to enjoy ? the trees with faces (homage to Rackham perhaps?), Little Green Cape's book has no title ? not, I suspect an omission but deliberate; Riddell suggest this in his verse prologue which also acts as the envoi. Who knows where a story will take you? ?I wonder? thought Green...?what will happen next...?

This is a joyful book designed to give pleasure not only through the humour of the text and illustrations but through the underlying visual satisfaction provided by a true artist of the picture book. Pick it up, walk through the gap between the trees ? and have fun.

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Links:

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/once-upon-a-wild-wood>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/232>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/ferelith-hordon>