



Winter of the Wolves

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

After burying his mother, Oslaf torches his empty home, and walks to find refuge in the village where his mother's old friend lives. He is taken in but crosses the chieftain's son. He works hard and when the villagers leave Northern Germany to try their luck in Britannia he is taken with them. Alfgar, their leader makes a pact with Wuffa and they are given land on which to settle, but the Britons push them to a huge battle which changes Oslaf's life for ever.

This short tale has echoes of Rosemary Sutcliff in it, following as it does a homeless boy who becomes a man, is tested in battle and finally finds his calling as a wordsmith, a teller of tales. The reader feels the difficulty of life, dominated by the search for food, and the need to be ever vigilant as attack could come at any time. The place of myth and the sense of a religion come through strongly and the text uses the old words, and the tale of Beowulf to great effect. The sense of place, important in an historical novel, takes the reader to the estuary in East Anglia where the villagers landed, and descriptions of the site of the battle make the reader see the Britons coming down the hillside towards them.

It is not easy to convey the real sense of being taken back in time in such a short book, only 160 pages, but in Tony Bradman's experienced hands, we are there in the early years of our history as a nation is being formed. This would read aloud well, and because it is short, be good for those boys whose interest needs to be caught and held.

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