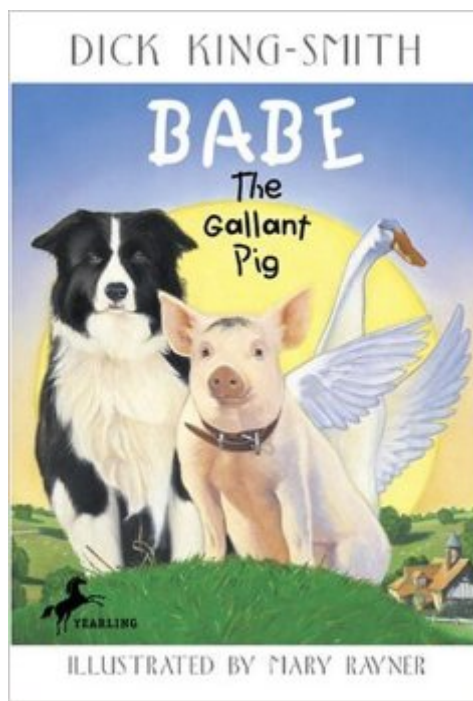


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Babe: The Gallant Pig



Synopsis

Dick King-Smith's classic story of Babe the sheep-herding pig is back with a charming new cover to win over a new generation of readers! When Babe arrives at Hogget Farm, Mrs. Hogget's thoughts turn to sizzling bacon and juicy pork chops. But before long, Babe reveals a talent no one could have expected: he can handle Farmer Hogget's stubborn flock better than any sheepdog ever could! When Farmer Hogget enters Babe in the Grand Challenge Sheepdog Trials, everyone, including his wife, thinks he is a fool. But he believes in Babe. Now it's just up to Babe to convince everyone else to believe in a sheep-pig! An ALA Notable Book • A Boston Globe "Horn Book Honor Book" • A Horn Book Fanfare Honor Book • An IRA-CBC Children's Choice • An NCTE Teachers' Choice • "A hilarious fantasy about a plucky piglet that learns how to tend sheep, Babe is a barnyard charmer." • "The Washington Post on the film adaptation" • "An animal fantasy which will inevitably be compared to Charlotte's Web. . . . A splendid book." • "The Horn Book, starred review" • "Impossible to resist." • "Booklist, starred review" • "One of the most delightful children's authors." • "The Guardian on Dick King-Smith"

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1040L (What's this?)

Series: Babe

Paperback: 128 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars • See all reviews (44 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #32,623 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #106 in Books > Children's Books

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Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

Customer Reviews

Like many of my generation, I came to "Babe" via the movies. I'm not proud of this fact. As a

children's librarian I like to pretend that I've heard about all my children's books in their original papery forms. This is hardly the case, of course. Lots of book (like the wonderful "Millions" by Frank Cottrell Boyce) first come to my attention through their film. "Babe" is one of those books though that stands up well to a reading after viewing its adaptation to the silver screen. Dick King-Smith had enough guts and wherewithal to write a children's book about a pig despite the fact that the greatest pig adventure tale (i.e. "Charlotte's Web") was bound to draw comparisons. But did he care what die-hard White fans would say? Not he! He wrote a truly interesting, original, and deeply meaningful tale all on his own and devil take the consequences! Babe has the inherent sweetness of Wilbur and the pluck and charm of Walter R. Brooks', "Freddy". There's even a moral to the tale, but it's so sly and unassuming that kids will end up learning something despite themselves. Well done there.

Farmer Hogget is a man of few words. Running a small farm of sheep, the occasional goose, and a family of sheepdogs, Hogget has never owned a pig (despite his own swinish name). At a nearby fair he happens to correctly guess the weight of a small piglet up for grabs. The pig is happy to go with Hogget but is deeply lonely and the farmer's kind-hearted sheepdog Fly takes the piggy under her wing and raises him as she does her own puppies. It soon becomes clear that Babe, as the pig is called, has a fast mind and is quick to learn. He befriends an old sheep named Ma and learns that by speaking politely to ewes, like herself, he is able to herd them as effectively as any sheepdog. Farmer Hogget is initially bemused by the idea but when it becomes clear that Babe is not only a first-rate sheep-pig but also a great protector of the flock, Hogget can't help but consider entering the animal in the upcoming sheepdog trials. But it's only when Fly and the sheep consider talking to one another sanely that Babe is given the key to keeping his master from becoming the laughing stock of the country. It's hard to read a book like this and not get bopped over the head time and time again by the things the movie added to the mix. In this story you will find no male sheepdog, no wacky duck sidekick, no singing mice, and no self-assured cat villainess. You don't need all that. This is a book that has as much emotional oomph as any Technicolor adaptation. Comparisons to E.B. White's book are inevitable, but the two stories aren't as similar as you might think. "Charlotte" was about growing up and how nothing in life ever stays the same. "Babe" is about overcoming prejudices, no matter how innate, and trusting in what you know to be good and true. When a character close to Babe dies, the result is not as wrenching and meaningful as Charlotte's death in "Charlotte's Web" but it still does the trick. "Babe" is beautiful in its simplicity. Now I'm reviewing the 20th Anniversary Edition of Babe at the moment. The illustrations are soft fluffy pictures that are the closest I've ever seen pencil come to pastel. It seems to me that when you're picking out which edition of "Babe" to have in your home, you need to make a quick decision

between the original and classic pen and inks of Mary Rayner or these new softy-softy pencilings of Maggie Kneen. I'm sure that had I grown up with the Rayner shots I'd be gung-ho about the original. As it stands, I hadn't any preconceived notions about the book when I picked it up. All I cared was that the newer edition not make the farmer and his wife look like the actors in the film. They don't, it's true, and Kneen's drawings have an entirely new take on the book. They make it very clear that the story takes place in the present day (Mrs. Hogget wears a sweatshirt and has a rather short and fashionable hairdo near the story's end). The farmer and his wife are both relatively young looking. Neither of these are flaws. Unfortunately, Kneen doesn't read into the text very clearly. The book goes on and on about how large Babe grows and how he almost rivals the sheep in size. In the book though he's still smaller than Fly and rather tiny to boot. There's none of those taut muscles the text expects us to see. On top of that, I can't get over the picture of Babe on the cover. Has anyone else noticed that his front legs don't seem to be drawn correctly? There are joints where joints should not be and his left trotter is mighty small. All in all, stick with the original pen and inks by Rayner. Not only do they match the tale but they also offer the far more exciting action sequences of Babe running, fighting dogs, and generally being an active protagonist. Kneen's Babe appears to prefer lying down and sitting. Tis the lesser of the two versions, no question. Altogether, "Babe" is just the kind of story to bring reluctant readers and voracious ones together to the table. It has something for everyone and is a deeply loving story. Perhaps Dick King-Smith's best, and certainly his best known. And I highly recommend that if this title pleases you that you seek out his roughly five thousand other animal tales. He's a prolific writer and a good one.

Mr. Hogget, a sheep rancher, won a pig named Babe at the fair, very much like the one I went to in Sheridan, WY! When Babe came to the ranch, he was a very little pig, so Fly, the sheep dog, decided to mother him along with her five puppies. Babe was soon calling Fly, Mum. Babe also became friends Maaa, an old ewe who at the time needed to be taken care of separately. Maaa was always complaining on how sheepdog treated sheep. Babe asked, "Mum, will you train me to be a sheep-pig?" She said, "Yes." So, Fly started to train him how to be a sheep-pig on ducks, and soon he was fairly good. One day, when Maaa was back in the pasture with the flock and Fly and Farmer Hogget were at market, he decided to go meet the flock. It was chaos! There were sheep rustlers there! Babe ceased them from stealing all the sheep. From then, on Farmer Hogget let Babe come with him and Fly to check the sheep. The first time he came with them Farmer Hogget tried to get him to work the sheep. He did it perfectly! From then on he did most of the sheep work. One day, he decided to go visit the sheep. Again it was chaos! This time it wasn't rustlers, but worriers! They had

Maaa down! Before they could kill her, Babe chased them away. Maaa died soon after. Farmer Hogget was readying babe for the sheep dog trials! Will he win? I recommend Babe the Gallant Pig, because it's very outstanding, exciting, and suspenseful!

It's impossible to not compare Babe to Charlotte's Web because it is also about a pig that is trying to save its neck. Babe really holds up well against the classic work. Babe (which is very much like the movie that came from it) tells a marvelous story and also contains a lot of depth. The short book tells the story of a pig who decides to become a sheep-dog (or sheep-pig). King-Smith relates humorous, exciting, and touching episodes of the pig's life until the novel reaches a splendid climax at the National Sheep-Dog Trials. The novel does have quite a bit to say about life. It speaks to overcoming traditional boundaries as Babe becomes a sheep-pig. The novel speaks to how fellow beings should be treated. Perhaps most importantly, Babe: The Gallant Pig speaks ... as Babe learns to treat the "stupid" animals (this is what they were known as prior to Babe) like sheep and ducks with politeness and friendship. Babe: The Gallant pig has a lot to say (particularly to children) and tells a great story. It certainly ranks among the top works of children's literature.

Dick King-Smith has written a real gem! He is a genius at characterization. We are immediately caught up in the contrasting characters of the farmer and his wife. She talks a blue streak with never a pause for breath and turns and twists at great length in long and convoluted sentences that take up half the page, question after question and answering most of them herself. One succinct word suffices her husband. The animal characters are even more rich! The loving mother sheep-dog takes poor little piglet Babe under her "wing". Loving and kind though she may be to Babe, she is completely rude and disdainful towards the "stupid" sheep. Babe learns the power of truly respectful kindness, and totally surpasses the dog in being able to manage the sheep herd and bring out the best in them. As a teacher, I believe this has a message for us. I've seen some "benevolent dictators" in my day, who treat students as simpletons and get as much. Kindness, respect, and assuming intelligence go a lot further!

This is a great read aloud for a 6 year old. I wanted to read it to her before we watched the movie and we both loved it although who would have thought that a book about a "sheep pig" with tons of information about sheep-herding trials would have been so interesting and moving. If you liked Charlotte's Web, you will like this. Now we are looking forward to the movie.

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