



The Children of the New Forest

Frederick Marryat

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In *The Children of the New Forest*, Marryat describes the trials and triumphs of the four Beverley children, orphaned during the English Civil War and forced to take refuge with a poor woodsman in the New Forest. This is the first annotated edition of a great children's classic, which has retained its popularity since 1847.

The Children of the New Forest Details

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Author : Frederick Marryat

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From Reader Review The Children of the New Forest for online ebook

Joni says

I started reading this book a year ago, but gave it up, it's a book you have to be in a certain mood to read... well for me anyway... but if you do find yourself putting it back on the bookshelf, remember to get it down one day when you're in need of something wholesome, historical but also exciting to read. Because this book is one of those rare things; it gets better with age. Sort of like wine, or so the saying goes. But anyway... what I'm trying to say is that it's a heavy read (it was published in 1847! Imagine that!) but it's worth it. What's quite refreshing is that Alice, the elder sister, has something of a personality, and so does Patience Heatherstone; so many times in classics like this, the girls and women are relegated to background figures, because that was just the way it was back then. And although Edward, Humphrey and Jacob are more prominent characters, the girls do get a look in, you will be pleased to know! Maybe I'm dwelling too much on that. Yes.

But anyway, I remember one year, at Center Parcs, Sherwood Forest (a great place), my auntie told me and my three cousins about the Roundheads and the Cavaliers, and we spent a frosty afternoon at the park, being Cavaliers in hiding. This book brings that fantasy to life, because while they are cooking and tending to the chickens, these children are hiding and in mortal danger, which makes for a good story in anyone's book.

Georgina says

A wonderful read. It relates beautifully how the children coped with living on their own in the forest, adapting to farming and hunting as they did in those days. It gives you a great desire to do the same. However, some parts which I thought quite important were too quickly narrated, as with the ending which goes from an exchanging dialogue on one page to the following year and happy ever after on the next. Otherwise, a lovely insight to life in the day, from a child's view point.

Bettie? says

Read here

Opening:

BY CAPT. MARRYAT, R.N. 1864.

CHAPTER I.

The circumstances which I am about to relate to my juvenile readers took place in the year 1647. By referring to the history of England, of that date, they will find that King Charles the First, against whom the Commons of England had rebelled, after a civil war of nearly five years, had been defeated, and was confined as a prisoner at Hampton Court. The Cavaliers, or the party who fought for King

Charles, had all been dispersed and the Parliamentary army under the command of Cromwell were beginning to control the Commons.

Ellinor says

The title "Children" of the New Forest is a little misleading. I had only skipped the blurb before reading so I thought this book would be about four little kids **playing** in the New Forest. Well, it wasn't. I really liked the novel anyway. It has a bit of everything in it: farming, adventure stories and a love story. I enjoyed reading it a lot, although I found the end a little hurried: Almost ten years are told in one chapter. It seemed like the author wanted to put the story to an end as soon as possible. This stood a little in contrast to the beginning of the book when it is told in all detail how wild cows and horses are captured, which I found a little boring after a certain time.

Angie Thompson says

Okay, but not destined to become a favorite.

I felt like most of the book was much too easy for the main characters. That's strange to say in a book about four children learning to survive on their own in the forest, but it's true. We never see much of their struggles, just their successes. They notice a problem, talk it over, find a solution that works, and move on. I kept waiting for the action or suspense to pick up, but it didn't until the very end (and by very end, I mean the last 2-3 chapters). There were a couple of suspenseful episodes in between, but they were very short and not nearly as dramatic as they could have been. To be clear, I don't mind sweet little stories about normal family life with no major crises. The problem with this one was that it kept acting like it wanted to be full of action and danger, but none of it ever materialized. (view spoiler) The last chapter or two covered a lot of time in a very short space, as if the only point was to skip forward in history several years so we could get a proper ending.

Even after all that, though, I probably would have given it three stars if not for Edward's ridiculous pride in the last chapter. I had really liked seeing him become more humble, learn to take advice, and become willing to trust certain people. And then to have him come back in the last chapter, after the major misunderstanding had been cleared up, more prideful and distrusting than ever just exasperated me. Just--really, Edward? Really?

Final rating--2.5 stars

Beth (bibliobeth) says

This book tells the story of four children - Edward, Humphrey, Alice and Edith, whose distinguished father Colonel Beverley is killed during the English Civil War while fighting the cause of King Charles and as a result, they become orphaned. An old forester, Jacob Armitage, whilst walking in the woods one day hears a group of men fighting against the king aka Roundheads forging a plan to set fire to Colonel Beverley's mansion, burning everything within, meaning that the children are in mortal danger. He immediately sets out to the grand house to warn the children's aunt and guardian, who refuses to leave the property. He manages to persuade her that he should take the children however, and raise them as his own grand-children while

teaching them the ways of the forest so they may be able to provide for themselves whilst concealing their identities. This is due to the king having fled, and Cromwell having England under his thumb. If the children's identities are revealed, it could be incredibly dangerous for them. The children pass some happy years in this manner with the love and tutelage of the old man, until he dies, and the children have to learn to survive on their own.

To be honest, when I started this book, I had a bit of trouble understanding how children could enjoy it. The subject matter seemed slightly too complex, and there are not many what I call "major action sequences." In fact, not much goes on of much interest, apart from a few fairly exciting hunting expeditions. It was almost what I can imagine the children of Narnia's lives to be like minus the war, wardrobe and talking animals. There are some interesting characters, Pablo their adopted gypsy boy was quite entertaining, along with the villain of the piece whose vendetta against the Edward I quite enjoyed and the adorable old forester Jacob Armitage. Disappointedly, the female characters seem like non-entities, with not much to say for themselves which is a shame. Not that this book is all bad... the historical element is very intriguing, and I wouldn't mind learning more about this period of history. As a classic piece of children's literature however, I think there were MUCH better books written around this time.

Please see my full review at <http://www.bibliobeth.wordpress.com>

Nikki says

When I first read this, I adored this and thought it was pretty much perfection. I read it over and over again, until the covers fell off my copy. I had that reaction to a lot of children's books, and I can't quite find the enchantment again in this one, which makes me sad. I decided to reread it after I came across a reference to it in one of the books I read for Introduction to Children's Literature.

It isn't really a very easily accessible text in some respects: rather biased, sometimes dry, rather didactic. Historical fiction is a turn-off in itself for some people. I remember being drawn in by the characters, though -- some of them are a little too good to be true, but Edward is at least a bit of an idiot sometimes, overly impetuous and jumping to conclusions. Alice and Edith are somewhat non-characters -- indeed, so is Patience, actually -- so I'm surprised I found so much to relate to, as a child. I suppose I didn't really care about whether the characters were male or female. Now I found the story surprisingly short on everything I was more interested in, in the later part of the book -- how exactly Edward gets on in the fighting, for example, and a more satisfying way of bringing all the characters together at the end. The ending paragraph or so is quite an irritating dry summary.

Still, there is still some of the magic in learning how they become so self-sufficient, in how clever Humphrey and Pablo are, and in the forest adventures. The stuff outside of the forest doesn't ring as true, though.

Sylvester says

This one seems to be in the same line of young adult fiction as Ballantyne or Stevenson (not that the writing is of Stevenson quality, just the same genre) - Stories For Boys, you know, kids out on their own, with no adult supervision, having to make their way in the world and participating on historical events in the meantime - in this case, the trouble between the Cavaliers and the Roundheads. Not a bad story, but I should have read it back when I was a teen myself. It would have hit the spot. Now? Not so much. However, I've been looking up Marryat's other books, and there are pirates and sea battles galore, so perhaps I just picked

The Wrong Book this time round. YA fiction is often just as good if not better than many adult novels. Better luck next time.

Kailey (BooksforMKs) says

During the English Civil War, the four Beverley children are orphaned when their wealthy father is killed fighting for the restoration of King Charles. Their grand home is burnt down and they are supposed dead, so they find shelter with a kindly old forester. They each learn to hunt, harvest, and care for their little cottage, living in seclusion deep in the forest. But the oldest boy, Edward, is restless and he dreams of going to war as his father did.

The siblings encounter many dangers and perplexities, highwaymen and robbers, spies from the Parliamentary government, and a new Intendant governor over the forest who is determined to capture anyone poaching the deer in the forest. But the siblings are resourceful and brave, so they flourish in their humble cottage, acquiring farm animals and planting small fields, dreaming of the time when their inheritance will be restored to them, if ever the true King returns to England.

I loved this story of the Beverley siblings! The plot is interesting and full of action and intrigue. I really liked even the simple aspects of the story about the children learning to do household tasks like cooking, the boys learning how to hunt, and the girls keeping a dairy.

I like the formal writing style and the vivid language of this book. I wish that the girls in the story had more time in the narrative. They are sort of background characters, and don't take part in most of the action, but I liked them! I just wish there was more in-depth writing about them.

I was really touched by the siblings deep emotional attachment to each other and to the old man who takes them in. Time and again, they are shown to have noble feelings and generosity to their friends. I loved how the siblings all work and sacrifice a great deal to care for and protect each other. Their first thought in any difficult situation is, "How can I take care of my siblings?"

Usually, I get bored with historical fiction, but I loved the historical aspects of this story. The characters made the history more intimate and immediate to the reader.

Christian West says

Gosh this book dragged. 4 children watch their house burn down in a revolution in the UK in the mid 1600s. They then go live in a forest. The daughters tend the house (aka are not related to the plot and thus get no writing dedicated to them) whilst the oldest son sets out to help his king and country. This goes on for 239 pages and covers about a year. Then in the last 9 pages there's a war, a loss, a win, another war, some marriages, and everything is wrapped up.

There seems to be a lot of positive reviews about this book on Goodreads. I strongly suspect that I'm reading a different book. I understand that this was written in the 1800s and so the language is going to be dense, but I've written plenty of other books from the time that moved along quicker. A lot of the novel comes across as a 'how to live in the forest' guide with some extra scenes put in to create a story, but if I wanted something like that I'd rather read *The Coral Island* which at least has pirates.

Duane says

To call this a children's book is somewhat misleading. Yes, it is about 4 children, but it is written in a style more suited to adult readers. It's still a good book. I would describe it more as a young adult, historical fiction novel. It's a bit of a history lesson about England in the mid 17th century during the English Civil War. King Charles I has been dethroned, eventually to be executed, and Oliver Cromwell has assumed leadership. The heir, Charles II has escaped to exile and will eventually become King when the civil war is over and the monarchy is restored. The four children of the story are from a wealthy and privileged family, their father a loyal colonel in the Kings army. When he is killed and their family home burned, they become orphaned. Believed dead, they are rescued by an old forester, and taken to his cottage in the New Forest to be raised under new identities. The story then proceeds with their life in the forest. It's predictable but enjoyable.

Meredith says

I wish I had read this as a child. It would have added greatly to the fort-making, food-finding, and hiding from the grown-ups fun.

As an adult I found it a quick and fun read. It's really more of a "how to survive in the woods/making your own farm if you start with a cottage, hunting dog and pony but not much else" with a bit of danger and excitement thrown in for good measure. Also "how to escape from the battle of Worcester once all is lost" and "how to hide your Royalist sympathies and friends in a Parliamentary autocracy". I can see why it would have been popular in the Victorian era when it was written, though probably most kids today would find it slow-going. Maybe it could be re-written as a "Choose your own adventure" story....it would pretty much soundly trounce any one of those I ever read. "There is no one in sight besides your new-found friends and the dead Roundhead soldiers. Your friends want to swap clothes with them to travel in safety. Do you 1) agree and take off your feathered hat in a flash (turn to page 43) or 2) scorn to hide your political ideals and ride on alone, abandoning the cowards where they stand (turn to page 85)

It isn't a great work of literature -- the characters are mostly two-dimensional props, once the farm is happily established and the "hero" has learned a few lessons, the story wraps up a few years at light speed with Charles II returning and everyone, now grown up, getting happily married off. The End.

Still quite fun though.

Zarish Fatima says

I loved this book. It begins with simple tragedy. Four kids end up living on family estate in a forest and they are taught to live a life at its fullest and to make most of the worst circumstances by a simple countryman. It is a beautiful book which revolves from childhood to adolescence to adulthood.

Beverly says

It is strange when there is a connection found between dissimilar things in our everyday life. While I was reading this book by Frederick Marryat, I read on a plaque on my nightly rounds at the museum that the artist Thomas Chambers used Marryat's naval writings as an inspiration for some of his seascapes. It shows how famous Marryat was back in the 1800s. Now he has been forgotten, although there is much that is sweet and charming about this story of 4 orphan children who have to make a life from scratch after their father is killed in a war between the Roundheads (those in favor of Cromwell) and the Cavaliers (who wanted to keep the monarchy in place) of England and their ancestral home is burned by the Roundheads, as their father fought for King Charles.

A kind and loyal forrester of Colonel Beverley (the children's father) takes them into his forest home and they are incognito as they were thought to have perished in the conflagration. The Forrester teaches the 2 boys and 2 girls how to survive and live off of the forest. Marryat is not a great wordsmith and it is simply told, the worst errors come in the conversations between the brothers, who don't talk in a natural manner, but seem to be making lists of things to each other. The girl's characters are underdeveloped and not as interesting as the boys are so I think this would be enjoyed by boys more than by girls.

Zane Jones says

DNF.

A school read, but luckily a multiple choice one... I'm reading Little Women instead.

It was so dull and boring, and the writing style... agh, no thanks. I doubt I'll ever come back to this. (Maaaybe. But only under dire circumstances. Haha.)
