



# Dahlia

*Barbara McClintock*

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**Looks can be deceiving!**

When Charlotte gets a delicate doll from her aunt Edme, she is not too happy. She tells the doll that she and Bruno, her bear, "like digging in dirt and climbing trees. No tea parties, no being pushed around in frilly prams. You'll just have to get used to the way we do things." Much to Charlotte and Bruno's surprise, Dahlia seems to like getting dirty while making mud cakes and racing wagons. But at the end of the day, Charlotte's aunt arrives for a visit and wants to see how Dahlia's doing . . . and Charlotte is in for another surprise.

Charming, detailed illustrations accompany this sweet story about making room for a new friend.

## Dahlia Details

Date : Published August 1st 2002 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux

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Author : Barbara McClintock

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## From Reader Review Dahlia for online ebook

### Sarah N says

Utterly delightful with several clever twists!

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### Jaclyn LeVasseur says

Summary: It was a beautiful blue morning, Charlotte and Bruno, her bear, were making mud cakes in the yard. Her mother called and there was a package for Charlotte, inside was a doll. Charlotte did not want a doll and it did not really fit in with the other items in her room. "We like digging in dirt and climbing trees," Charlotte said to her doll. They made mud cakes, made boats from sticks and leaves, went fishing, dug in the flower bed and sat in a wagon and went for a ride. At the top of the hill, Charlotte joined a race with boys. They laughed at her because she had a doll. But in the end, she won the grand prize. She named her doll Dahlia and went back home for dinner. Her Aunt Edme, who gave her the doll, was there. Charlotte showed her the doll and her Aunt Edme knew Dahlia was meant to play outside with Charlotte.

Theme: The overall theme of this story is gender stereotypes. Just because Charlotte and Dahlia are girls they can play in the mud and race boys. And also, we should not judge others because it is okay to be different.

Personal response: I really enjoyed reading this story because not being stereotypical is very important because we should never judge what others do. It reminded me of my childhood because I had many dolls but, I was the complete opposite of Charlotte. I played with my dolls hair, never took them outside, had tea parties, and treated them like royalty.

Recommendation: This book creates a conversation about judging a book by cover. We are all unique and it is important they we stay true to ourselves. Parents and teachers can talk with children about being themselves; that they are all unique and it is okay to be different.

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### Janessa says

This is one of my all time, favorite-ever picture books. I adore Barbara McClintock. Her illustrations exude a detailed elegance that bring to mind Victorian parlors, frilled cuffs, and high tea. But in this book she pairs that elegance with the fresh, rough air of the outdoors. These two opposing forces combine in her head-strong protagonist, Charlotte.

The premise of the story is this: Charlotte is a born naturalist. A two page spread of her bedroom reveals collections of abandoned birds nests, walking sticks, and an assortment of creepy crawly pets. When Charlotte's elderly Aunt Edme presents her the gift of a beautiful, lace-covered doll, Charlotte is skeptical. But she names the doll Dahlia, and decides to bring her along on some of her outdoor adventures, which include making mud pies, and beating the neighborhood boys in wagon race down the big hill. By the end of the day, Dahlia has won Charlotte over. Her lace petticoat is in rags and her perfect complexion is splattered with mud, but her face has visibly softened into a warm, happy smile.

Aunt Edme comes for a visit, and has something to say about the state in which she finds her gift, but it ends

up being the perfect conclusion to a charming story that celebrates natural beauty and the spirit of exploration that discovers it out.

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### **Melissa says**

Loved the imaginary play pictured and put in the story. Something kids could do more of, and perhaps this story would help spur their imaginations. Loved the twist at the end of the aunt happy about how the doll turned out.

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### **Siskiyou-Suzy says**

A cute book but the best part is Charlotte's bedroom: Her collections and her little life is awesome.

Charlotte is a tomboy (or has that term officially become offensive?), who loves to explore and play and climb and race. When she receives a prissy little doll, she looks at it with disgust, but plays with it anyway. Throughout the day, the doll, Dahlia, gets more and more dirty and mussed up. After a bad fall, she doctors Dahlia but can't fix the dirty clothes and tangled hair. But when she shares Dahlia with Aunt Edme, who gifted Dahlia to Charlotte, Aunt Edme is delighted. She knew that Charlotte with play with Dahlia in the way Dahlia needed.

*Dahlia* is a lovely story that sort of mixes the idea of femininity and childhood and properness, etc. Just mixes it all up in a blender and comes out saying: whatever you wanna do, it's cool. There's not much in here that is against lace and properness -- it's just not Charlotte's thing. But I love how quickly Charlotte falls in love with Dahlia, even winning a race with her at the helm.

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### **Allison says**

Dahlia is the doll that Charlotte receives from her Aunt, but at first Charlotte doesn't know if she will like her. The doll is too dressed up and fancy for the adventures that Charlotte likes to go on. After an afternoon of making mud pies, racing their wagon and climbing a tree, they decide they will be the best of friends. Little Dahlia falls off a high branch and Charlotte has to nurse her back to health. But when her aunt comes for dinner that night what will she think of the doll all covered in dirt stains with a tattered dress and disheveled hair?

This book is appropriate for ages 5+

I'm not sure how I would use this in a classroom but I would recommend it as a fun leisure read. You spend an afternoon with a very adventurous little girl and it would spark the imagination in any kid to go off and have an adventure with their own toys.

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### **Laura Molinario says**

Picture Book

### **Elaine says**

Great book about a tomboy girl that gets a china doll from an elderly aunt. The doll, by the end of the day of playing, doesn't look perfect anymore, but it does look loved.

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### **Ann says**

A very sweet story about a young girl who gets a delicate doll from her aunt. At first the girl doesn't want the doll (she's a bit of a tom boy) but after a while the doll is able to join in on the girl's adventures and becomes a happier doll for it. It's a very sweet story and the illustrations are lovely. A great book for remembering that we each make our toys into something unique, and that the fun and imagination is in what the child brings to the toy, not the other way around.

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### **Megan M says**

A truly magical little book about a young girl who loves to run around and play outside and the doll she is given by her aunt. Charlotte has never wanted a doll and doesn't want to be forced into tea parties and dress up games. She'd much rather play outside, race with the boys and make mud cakes. But quickly she finds that her doll is the perfect playmate. The illustrations are beautiful and detailed. Though it is a fairly recent publication, it has a timelessness that makes it feel like an old weathered book I pulled out of my grandmother's attic. A must read!

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### **Christina says**

Solid story about an outdoorsy girl who receives a pretty doll as a gift. I liked the detailed illustrations which had a vintage feel, and set the story around 1900 if my guess about the clothes is right.

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### **Lisa Vegan says**

Oh, I'm so glad I've found Barbara McClintock. This is another winner from her.

Unlike Charlotte, the girl in the book, I did like dolls when I was a girl, but I liked dolls who make appearances in books even better.

This is a fabulous book where a doll becomes a central character.

The story is funny and sweet and engaging. Charlotte and Bruno and Dahlia, and Aunt Edme, are memorable characters. McClintock remembers exactly what it feels like for a child to play with stuffed animals, dolls, and toys, and how being imaginative is an important part of play and how dolls and bears are real for a child.

The illustrations are lush and fit the story so well. The cover illustration is actually my least favorite of the bunch.

This would make a wonderful gift for most young girls.

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### **Dolly says**

This is a wonderful story about a fun-loving little girl named Charlotte (who loves to climb trees and is not afraid of getting dirty) who is given a fancy doll and proceeds to love her and play with her. The eventual meeting with the aunt who gave the doll to Charlotte offers a very pleasant surprise.

I loved that it depicts the little girl as being adventurous and free-spirited, but also loving and nurturing. I like that she can be rough and tumble and keep up with the boys and still knows how to clean up nicely and be feminine and pretty, too. I love the philosophy of the story that shows that our things are for loving and playing with, not just displaying. That is exactly why I do not have "guest towels" that no one uses or fancy table settings that are kept tucked in a china cabinet for display only. To me, life is too short and stuff is just stuff. Nice dishes and towels are for using and nice dolls are for playing with. But I suppose I digress...

The illustrations are nicely rendered, with soft pastels and an old fashioned feel that complements the story. The expressions on Charlotte's face are priceless. And the tale is engaging and fun, too. We really enjoyed reading this story together. It's a great tale for tom-boys of all ages.

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### **Kathryn says**

I love this book! And tomorrow I would love to wake up and spend the day with Charlotte and Bruno and Dahlia. What a sweet story, and the pictures are very pretty. I really appreciate Charlotte's character; she loves nature and playing outdoors, climbing trees and fishing... but she also knows how to take care of her dolls. I was much the same as a girl. I can't say enough about this darling story except READ IT and fall in love yourself.

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### **R. G. Nairam says**

A book for little girls like I was: constantly in dresses, and climbing trees playing at Robin Hood.

Delightful and surprising.

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