ForeWord Reviews

PICTURE BOOKS

Gilbert Alexander Pig
Gael Cresp
David Cox, illustrator
Barefoot Books
978-1-84148-215-6
(April 2000)

“Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin,” replies Gilbert Alexander Pig. Gilbert uses this response as the wolf threatens to knock down his house, eat his fish and blow his trumpet himself. Throughout this story Gilbert and the wolf are at odds over this trumpet that Gilbert loves to play to the stars by the moonlight. Cresp has drawn upon the theme of The Three Little Pigs to tell the tale between Gilbert and his nemesis the Wolf.

Gilbert has left home to seek his own adventure. He has taken with him his knapsack and his trumpet. After walking all afternoon, he arrives by the river and decides that this is the place to stay. Gilbert builds his tent, catches and cooks a fish and then plays his trumpet to the stars all night. This setting is peaceful for Gilbert until the wolf intrudes, threatening to tear down the tent, eat the fish and play Gilbert’s trumpet. This forces Gilbert to run for his life, taking his trumpet with him and leaving behind his other belongings.

The chase continues to the mountains and until Gilbert arrives in the city. By playing his trumpet he is able to earn enough money to build a brick home. Yet the fish he cooks in his house are not the same. The stars he plays to through the window are not the same. The Wolf is still after him. Instead of continuing to play victim to the wolf, Gilbert faces the wolf, bravely saying, “We need to talk about this.” They both realize that to have what they want they need to come to an agreement. What results is a fantastic example of conflict resolution.

Cresp has used traditional tales in her story telling to show life in the modern world. With this book she has drawn upon a great children's story to examine the role of being a victim and how conflict resolution and agreement is truly preferred by the characters. The vocabulary is simple enough for children to understand the concept as well as to enjoy the chase between Gilbert and the Wolf. Illustrator David Cox has written and illustrated many children's books. The illustrations in this book are presented to downplay the frightening undertones. What results is a creative way for two beings to have what they want from the world around them and forge a friendship at the same time.