



The Remarkable Story of Willie the Crow: A Hickory Doc's Tale

Linda Harkey

Mike Minick, Illustrator

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The Remarkable Story of Willie the Crow is a heartwarming tale for young readers about embracing differences.

Linda Harkey's picture book *The Remarkable Story of Willie the Crow* is a tail-wagging tale of a friendship between two unlikely creatures that illustrates the importance of accepting and embracing our differences.

As narrated by the wise Hickory Doc, a German Shorthaired Pointer who lives with his canine family at the Lazy Dog Hacienda, life sounds doggone perfect in this tale. Long days are spent hunting quail, chasing squirrels, and doing what all dogs do best: napping. But then Hickory's daughter Patch is struck smack on the head by a wayward crow, Willie, who is in desperate need of flight lessons—or a pair of glasses. Young Patch is charmed by her new feathered friend. Together they pass sunny afternoons romping across wide open spaces until Patch falls into the pool while giving Willie chase. The poor canine can't swim, and what ensues is a testament to true friendship that overcomes physical differences.

There's plenty of action in this story, including bird hunting, near-drownings, and dogs roaming across the prairie. The story moves fast because the characters are always in motion. There's also lots of dialogue in the form of short, declarative sentences. Some scenes are light on energy, though, as when Patch is in danger of drowning; there, the dialogue doesn't convey the seriousness of the situation.

The book's illustrations match the text, showing wide-eyed, long-eared dogs loping across verdant pages and capturing the canines' enthusiasm, if without much contrast or depth. Among the pages, the closeup illustrations of animals at work or play are the best and most empathetic.

The story's eventual conclusion that what makes us different is also what makes the world a better place makes *The Remarkable Story of Willie the Crow* a heartwarming tale for young readers.

BARBARA NICKLES (February 14, 2019)

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