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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ JUVENILE FICTION

Woolie

Mark Jay Bingham
Margo Anhder Mark, illustrator
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Children of all ages are familiar with the nursery rhyme that tells the story of Mary and her little lamb that followed her to school. *Woolie* tells readers how Mary and the lamb came to be together in the first place. Mary's Uncle Marcus raised sheep on a farm near her house. When Uncle Marcus had three lambs born to one ewe he knew that he must find a way to provide for the third lamb. Ewes are only able to nurse two babies at a time so the fact that Uncle Marcus's ewe had birthed three babies was unusual indeed. Mary took over the care and feeding of the abandoned lamb and became her rescuer. Forever after in the minds of children Mary and the lamb will be inseparable.

Author Bingham grew up working with sheep in a small farming community in Utah. The story of Woolie comes from his own experience with handling and caring for sheep like Woolie and her family. Bingham recently began writing books for children and this is a delightful entry into the world of literature for children. It is reminiscent of the alternate point of view tales told by Jon Scieszka which concern the stories of the three little pigs and Hansel and Gretel.

Although the rhymes seem contrived in some places the rhythm still works. The illustrator has done a delightful job of drawing Woolie with her big eyes and long eyelashes. The drawings of the sheep are simple but with great detail. The remainder of the illustrations add color and depth to the story making this an excellent read aloud for young children. This story will find its way into the hearts of young children as a companion to the original nursery rhyme.

JOYCE RICE (April 21, 2008)

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