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The River Singers

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~~Not a Choice:~~

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Media type:

Book

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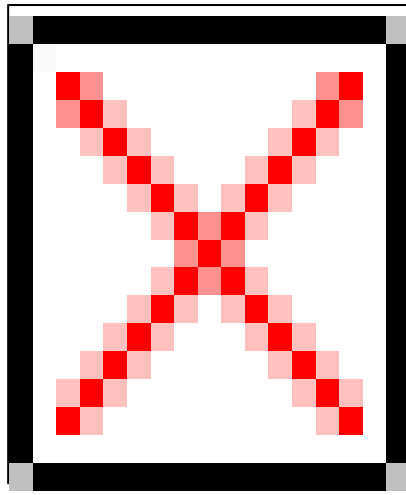
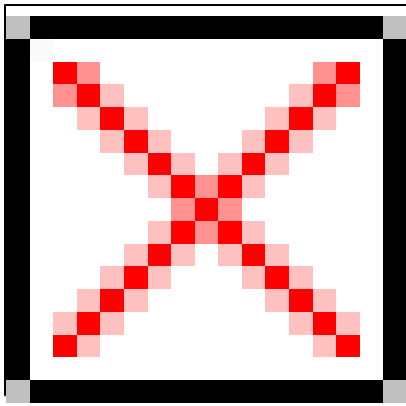
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The banks of the Great River have always been home to the water voles. But now there is a threat to their safety and their lives. When their mother is killed, Sylvan and his siblings set off to find a safe haven. This quest will be full of surprises and dangers - and tragedy. Will they survive to find a new home?

A novel about water voles? It seems an unlikely subject. But in the event, Tom Moorhouse carries it off well. Certainly it is no epic on the scale of **Watership Down** - but then water voles are very small. Its theme, like Adam's classic and Colin Dann's **Animals of Farthing Wood**, is a quest for a new home in the face of danger. However, here the danger does not come from the activities of man. Rather - and this is particularly effective - the danger is from within the animal world. It is the danger posed by the appearance of mink, a very real threat to indigenous wild life, such as water voles.

Of course, there is always the problem of how the animals themselves will be portrayed. Moorhouse has adopted the convention of partial anthropomorphism. Here the water voles are given names, characters and a self awareness but their lives and actions are dictated by the habits of their species. Young readers are introduced to a very real world where nature, even the habitat which nurtures, can be cruel, sometimes fatal, through characters to whom they can relate. Though always water voles in behaviour, Sylvan, Fern, Aven, and Orris, are also recognisable through lively dialogue and their reaction to situations. As a result, their adventures are both reassuringly conventional and intriguing

While this is not **The Wind in the Willows**, nor Ernest Thompson Seton, Moorhouse clearly has a love and knowledge of the river world and his descriptions of the Great River - Sinethis - seem to owe much to both these writers in the way he presents the relationship between the animals and their environment. Moments of reflection are well handled and do not halt the narrative drive but rather add depth.



The journey may be epic, but the novel is far from overwhelming and combined with the illustrations makes an attractive package that is deal for KS2 and confident KS1 readers. A first novel of promise and one to be recommended.

Read the first chapter here <http://fdslive.oup.com/www.oup.com/oxed/children/river-singers/index.html> [4]

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