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Bone Music

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

From the beginning of his writing for young people, David Almond has been concerned with the malleability of time and perception: the way in which the past and present are twisted within us and shape us; and how our nature, for better and worse, remains elemental despite all the trappings of the modern world that we wear and carry with us. In his work, the visionary and the ordinary are inseparable. Perhaps not as in earlier ages of signs and miracles but never too far away, particularly in childhood and adolescence. In this new novel, his protagonist Sylvia, has moved from Newcastle to the wilds of Northumbria. At first, she hates it, cut off from friends and all she has ever known, even her mobile phone is near useless. But gradually she is drawn into an understanding of the place and of herself. Music, reaching back through the Northumbrian folk tradition (clog dancing and all) into prehistory, plays a big part; particularly through the bone flute of the title, fashioned from the wing of a dead buzzard. And there are new friends, too: Gabriel, a boy of her own age, who makes the flute with her; and old Andreas, a former prisoner of war from Germany with a troubling past. Yet, perhaps more than any of Almond's other novels, it is what Sylvia herself experiences that is important. Among the plains peoples of the Native Americans, a young man would go on a vision quest into the wilderness, where he would find the name by which he would be known for the rest of his life. Sylvia, too, goes out into the dark Northumbrian wilderness (passing a fallen 'totem pole?') to find her own way from the past into the future.

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