



The Ghost-Eye Tree

Bill Martin Jr. , John Archambault , Ted Rand (Illustrator)

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One dark and windy autumn night when the sun has long gone down, a young boy and his older sister are sent to the end of town to get a bucket of milk. As they walk down the lonely road, bathed in eerie moonlight, all the boy can think about is the ghost-eye tree.

Oooo...

I dreaded to go...

I dreaded the tree....

Why does Mama always choose me

When the night is so dark

And the mind runs free?

What will happen when they come to the tree? Can they run past it or will it reach out and grab them?

Any child who has been frightened of the dark will enjoy this scary book, which is meant to be read aloud. Bill Martin, Jr., and John Archambault developed the story as a reader's theater piece, which they have performed in schools across the country. Now, with Ted Rand's stunning illustrations, the ghost-eye tree comes to life. Watch out!

The Ghost-Eye Tree Details

Date : Published October 15th 1988 by Square Fish (first published 1985)

ISBN : 9780805009477

Author : Bill Martin Jr. , John Archambault , Ted Rand (Illustrator)

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Shante' Polite says

Title: The Ghost-Eyed Tree

Author: Bill Martin Jr.

Publisher and Date: Square Fish, 1988

The Ghost-Eye Tree tells of a young brother and sister sent by their mother to fetch a bucket of milk on a windswept night. To do so, they must pass the dread "Ghost-Eye tree," a shadowed and sinister-looking snag which they are sure is haunted. Brother has a tough-guy beat-up fedora to bolster his courage. His sister says it makes him look stupid, but brother says he needs it, if he is to accomplish the demanding mission. On the way home, burdened with the heavy milk pail, the two must again pass the ominous tree. It (or the owl half-hidden in the branches, or the wind) emits a frightful wail, and the children bolt for the safety of home, both of them scared out of their wits. Brother's hat is gone, lost somewhere near the terrible tree. Sister, who knows what it means to him, runs back, rescues the hat and restores it to tough-guy little brother.

Activity: I would read this book to my student's at some point close to Halloween. I remember reading this book as a little girl and how creepy it was. I remember relating to the fear both the little boy and his sister experienced. It is a great book for not only the story, but illustrations as well. So I would encourage my students to read it independently.

C. says

“**The Ghost-Eye Tree**” draws our imagination. All of **Ted Rand**’s work on this book is widely beloved. The whole story is set at night, which naturally induces a richness of colour scheme and a mysterious atmosphere. There must be a skill in night art. You want visible detail and colour but obscurity and shadows come into play. I am no drawer or painter but easily recognize visual art that I love and have an eye for what is special. Further to a natural obscurity, **Ted** made a tree and moon exceptionally eerie. Any page containing them, including the book cover, exudes a mysterious mood right away. From Mercer Island, Washington award-winning **Ted** lived from 1916 to 2005.

John Archambault is nicknamed “alchemist” for turning children’s dread of school books into loving to read. A Californian, he made six music compilations and twenty children’s books; many with **Bill**. Part of the narrative and dialogue roll in a singsong way, which might be attributed to **John**, a musician, although one of **Bill Martin Junior**’s arts was poetry. I like the poetic rhythm deftly strung into plain dialogue. I remind authors that questions should be narrated with “asked”, NEVER “said”!

Bill was a principal who sought great teaching material and started publishing. This Kansas man lived from 1916 until 2004. The tale is not called historical fiction but doesn’t sit right for 1985. Somewhere, you might heft a pail in 1985 but milk delivery was wide. However: rural people think ahead and stock supplies and we 1980s children were drilled about danger. Our parents would not send us out once! That hair bun does not reflect a 1980s Mom either! With a believable errand and non-bitchy sister, I would love the spooky intent. Even without the tree doing anything or any clearly-described legend.

M J says

Bill Martin, Jr.'s The Ghost-Eye Tree. is a story about a time that is a distant memory in the minds of many adults. It is a time that has never existed for many children. In this story a young boy and his sister are sent to the local dairy farm to fill the family's milk bucket. However, in order to retrieve the milk they must first walk past an old spooky tree which looks to have a Ghost-Eye when the moon shines just right.

A boy's hat, the Ghost-Eye tree, and a sibling's teasing continuously crop up throughout the tale. Even though this story is about traveling at night to get milk for the family, the reader will notice that the actual focus is on the hat, the tree, and the relationship between siblings. The boy loves his hat and it makes him feel brave. This emotion is needed as he walks the dark road past the tree that seems to stare and reach for him. However, the hat betrays him when he needs it the most.

The sister plays two parts in this story. She spends much of the time telling her brother that he is afraid and that his hat is stupid. However, when the occasion arises she proves to be the sister he can depend on. Children with siblings reading this story will easily connect with the complex relationship between these two.

Originally published in 1985 this story is beautifully written. It would also be a good read aloud book. The illustrations have a dark ominous almost fuzzy look that magnifies the feelings the Ghost-Eye tree creates. However, there are bright lighted pictures sprinkled within the book. These warm colors show up when trusted adults such as the mother and the milkman enter the story.

Even though The Ghost-Eye Tree contains topics most children can not personally connect with, the story itself provides some unique opportunities to teach history and relationships. The savvy instructor could use this book to discuss how much things have changed in the past few decades. After all it wasn't long ago, just a mere three decades for some of us, that we were still fetching milk from the local dairy and using party lines to chat with our friends.

Another lesson idea could include bringing in rotary phones from the past and perhaps a guest speaker who can chat about the topics presented in this story. Children could ask if the speaker ever experienced similar frightening images such as the Ghost-Eye as a child. It might be interesting to learn that adults once had the same feelings as the children sitting across from them. After all, the fear of the unknown is still relevant. Plus, children are often fascinated by the strange devices of the past that look vaguely familiar to the devices of today. Just that aspect alone could present many other teachable connections.

An exploration of relationships would also be interesting to explore with children. Who can or should they trust? Do all siblings argue like this brother and sister? Are these healthy arguments? Did the adults in their lives ever argue with their siblings? These are just a few interesting questions children could explore.

Overall, The Ghost-Eye Tree is a fun story that children today can still appreciate. This book can still be found in the children's section of the library and many bookstores. Appropriate for ages 8-11.

Melki says

A boy and his older sister must pass by a spooky old tree on their way to do an errand for their mother. Ted Rand's watercolor illustrations are beautiful and so evocative of a simpler time.

Dynasty Zayas says

The Ghost-Eye Tree tells of a young brother and sister sent by their mother to fetch a bucket of milk on a windswept night. To do so, they must pass the dread "Ghost-Eye tree," a shadowed and sinister-looking snag which they are sure is haunted. Brother has a tough-guy beat-up fedora to bolster his courage. His sister says it makes him look stupid, but brother says he needs it, if he is to accomplish the demanding mission. On the way home, burdened with the heavy milk pail, the two must again pass the ominous tree. It (or the owl half-hidden in the branches, or the wind) emits a frightful wail, and the children bolt for the safety of home, both of them scared out of their wits. Brother's hat is gone, lost somewhere near the terrible tree. Sister, who knows what it means to him, runs back, rescues the hat and restores it to tough-guy little brother.

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Nam says

My father used to read this to me. I love this book dearly.

Maxzine Rossler says

The Ghost- Eye Tree is a poetic book about a young brother and sister that are sent by their mother to go and get some milk. While on their trip they run into a road block which gets their imaginations running wild. The illustrations help set the scene of the creepy adventure they are about to endure, and helps the put the reader in the children's shoes.

This book reminded me of childhood memories from growing up in the country. Living next to a cornfield created creepy sounds, and made me think as if there was something or someone else there. Also, the bond between the brother and sister portrayed in this book is an inseparable bond. When she goes back to grab his hat it shows that distinct bond that is formed between family members. This message is something that is important to relay to young children because they need to know that you need special people in your life to help you through your years.

This book would be a good book for when they kids are learning about poetry. This book could be used as an example, and after reading this book have the kids write a poem of their own. Also, while reading the book you can ask the students what word rhyme, and start a discussion about that. This will help the kids see what it means when words rhyme and it will help them understand why they are important to poetry.

This book did not have a lexile rating, but by the word choice, and content of the book I would say this would be an appropriate read aloud for kindergarten to about 3rd grade. According to Scholastic children

should be reading this book independently by the end of second grade.

Jay-san says

This was the first book that I ever signed out of any library (probably around 5 or 6). It's even scarier when I read it now: 23 years later.

Heather says

I like stories that are a bit spooky and scary but psychologically. There is really nothing out there to be afraid of other than their over active imaginations. When I asked my kids if they liked it they said "NO". Hahaha. The scariest thing about this library book was it's musty smell. Ick! I wouldn't mind owning this story so that says something.

Diane says

“One dark and windy night” ... two children are asked to go fetch a bucket of milk. It is a scary walk at night because of the Ghost-Eye Tree (feared by all). Nothing happens on the way to get the milk, but on the way home the Ghost-Eye Tree reaches out to grab them (does it really?) and the boy loses his “tough” hat. Who will make it back?

Facing fears

Cathy Hall says

Oh, my kids loved this book! A classic in building suspense and mood.

Audrey says

A young boy and his sister are sent to the other side of town to fetch milk. Halfway there, however, is the dreaded ghost-eye tree. Both kids try to act tough and not show that they’re scared, that is until the ghost-eye tree reaches out for them.

The illustrations are done in dark watercolors and give the book an ethereal, timeless feeling. The text is exceptionally well written, full of rhyme, repetition and rhythm.

Todd Strader says

Oooo...
how dark it was...
how dread it was...
walking the road.
to the end of the town...
for the halfway tree...
the Ghost-Eye tree...
was feared by all...

A great read with wonderful illustrations... perfect for Halloween...

Andréa says

This book terrified me as a child. I still hate seeing the cover because the tree creeped me out so much.

Heather says

Wobnderful Halloween choice! By KS author Bill Martin.
