



Feathers and Fools

Mem Fox, Nicholas Wilton (Illustrator)

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Long ago and far away, in a rambling garden beside a clear blue lake, two flocks of birds began to fear each other because of their differences. The fear grew, and soon the birds became enemies, hoarding great quantities of weapons to protect themselves--until panic struck and the chance for peace seemed lost forever.

Feathers and Fools Details

Date : Published May 1st 2000 by HMH Books for Young Readers (first published January 1st 1989)

ISBN : 9780152023652

Author : Mem Fox , Nicholas Wilton (Illustrator)

Format : Paperback 36 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Fiction, War

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From Reader Review Feathers and Fools for online ebook

Vidushi Chaudhry says

A serious picture book about the consequences of not talking to each other. For older readers, an excellent resource for discussion on war, peace, intolerance and stereotypes.

Liaken says

I picked this book up for the art, not knowing anything about it until I was reading it to my nieces. Imagine my surprise when everyone is dead from fear-based killing at the end with the exception of two eggs that hatch, one from each side. The allegory felt both extreme and preachy--and not at all appropriate for children.

Cheryl says

Because of Meg's review.

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Too solemn, and yet full of itself, for me. Illustrations verge on artsy-fartsy, esp. as design had the text on pages that are dark enough to make it hard to read. I can see teachers and parents sharing it with kids, but I can't see kids enjoying it. And if a book doesn't appeal, will a child remember its lesson?

Meg McGregor says

I was a middle school teacher for thirty years, and always read this story, at least once per semester! The story is riveting and the illustrations are absolutely amazing!!

This is a fable highlighting the ways the swans and the peacocks grew paranoid of each other, feared each other, and ultimately caused a cataclysmic destruction of both species.

It was only a baby peacock and baby swan that survived the holocaust.

This is the most poignant passage to me.

"But the swans, seeing them (the peacocks) coming, made ready. Soon cries filled the air and blood darkened the earth. A cloud of feathers rose into the sky and haunted the sun."

With the ongoing conflict between the US and North Korea, this story is as relevant today as when it was first published!!!

Chantal says

I was surprised to read the negative comments so feel compelled to offer some insight.

Even though I am now an adult, I read this book initially when I was ~4 years old (1997). I found it mesmerizing. It offered an explanation to why wars occur. Children at such an age are still aware wars occur. This is not new information. It's on the television, radio, newspapers; we are confronted with this reality our entire lives. So reading stories with them on this topic is not as 'adult' as these comments would lead one to believe. Furthermore, it offered an alternative to war too. The tone of this book stayed with me throughout my childhood and life, and I thank you Mem Fox for creating such a poignant work of art capable of stirring such everlasting morality and empathy.

This book is nothing short of perfect.

It is not your typical light-hearted tale, no, but it is both powerful and important.

Joyce Yattoni says

I try to start Monday's classes with a picture book read aloud because most students love them. This is a picture book for mature readers and showcases what can happen when people don't respect one another's differences. The characters are swans and the peacocks who feel threatened by one another because of one flippant comment that got out of control. The birds end up going to war and they are all killed. Fortunately, the innocence of the newly born offspring survive the war and life can start anew. A great example of the literary device - allegory. Illustrations are just beautiful.

Amanda says

I have to admit I feel uncomfortable reviewing this after reading about how much everyone *loves* this book -- am I missing something? I am the librarian for a PK-5 elementary school, and I came across this book the other day (I am a new librarian there). My habit is to randomly flip open the book, read a few lines, and then flip to the beginning. The first few lines I read from this book were about how blood rained down the sky, and it struck me as oddly and particularly violent. Now, please don't get me wrong -- I understand violence is a reality and our children are exposed to violence. This book is an attempt to explain war and violence.[return][return]However.[return][return]I thought perhaps it was too abstract and allegorical for younger children. If I read it to the high school children I used to teach and we discussed the allegory and metaphors for war and peace, that would be *much* more appropriate. Even then, I thought the writing just tried too hard to be poetic, and missed the mark -- it felt trite. The ending is too abrupt and contrived. As far as appropriateness is concerned, I feel it may be all in how the book is used. Your opinion may vary. But I was not a fan of this book for young elementary children, even though it is marketed towards young children (and hence my low star rating). I will, however, consider recommending it to high school teachers as a paired reading for longer works dealing with war and violence.

Anna Baker says

Mem Fox is a queen of dignified children stories. This is a beautifully written and illustrated book about a political conflict between swans and peacocks that escalates into war, but at the end a baby swan and

peacock become friends.

This would be an excellent book for older kids (probably wouldn't keep the attention of younger kids) to engage with the subject of war. The ending of the story can be empowering for young people, because it implies that if they can help solve the problem by promoting peace and being kind towards all people. Connections from this book to real life situations could be powerful. This book would be good to pair with a social studies unit on any war, because it can help the kids process the information they are learning by keeping their minds on the big picture. Maybe before dishing out details of a specific war, the class could collectively chart out the escalation of the war and its predicted ending. As the class learns details of real wars, they can chart them out in a similar way and compare the two. Hopefully this thinking would spark questions in each individual student, that could lead discussion and further research.

Mari says

An incredibly poignant picture book about one of our deepest flaws, and our ability to overcome it. The brevity of the story cuts right to the heart of the matter and the soul. Recommended to both young and old.

Samantha Hanhart says

A timeless story about fearing things you do not understand.

Rebecca Whitney says

This story was new to me and I was very surprised by the deep message it contained about judging and fearing those who do not look like us. So many conversations could be started from this dark fable, and ones that are very necessary in today's society.

Lillian Martin says

Well I like peacocks and swans. I've seen a white duck before that was probably a swan. I didn't know swans made nests.

Parent review: much too violent.

Nikki says

This book brought up a lot of good questions, which I appreciate, but it wasn't my favorite Mem Fox book so far. The idea of always thinking of fighting making someone more afraid and/or eager to fight is a good point but I'm not sure it came across in the best way...but again, that's why I was reading it aloud - to have the conversations!

Salix says

This is a simple cautionary tale that everyone should read, children, young adults, adults. It is a little dark, but most are--that's where the wisdom is. There are valuable lessons from this story. Don't listen to what everyone else says, don't follow the crowd--see for yourself! Instead of fearing what you don't understand, be mindful and learn. Read this book, and then think about it for a minute. Can this same story not be traced throughout the ages of mankind?

J says

Deep. Basically a story about prejudice and how, in the end, we're more alike than anything. For older kids.
