



The Earth Hums in B Flat

Mari Strachan

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Every night, 12-year-old Gwenni Morgan flies in her sleep. She leaves the bed she shares with her sister and soars into the night sky, listening to the nighttime sounds of her small Welsh village below. Irrepressible Gwenni -- a dreamer full of unanswerable questions and unbounded curiosity -- is childlike yet touchingly adult. Reluctantly facing a modern world, she prefers her nightly flights to school and her chores. Blessed with the uncommon insight of a young girl, Gwenni's view of the world is unparalleled.

Quaint, odd, touched, funny in the head: Gwenni is all too familiar with the taunts of her peers and fields them with equanimity beyond her years. She knows she can no more change her nature than stop the sun from rising. And when a neighbour goes missing, Gwenni turns amateur sleuth, determined to solve the mystery of his disappearance. Little does she realize that the trail she's pursuing will bring her uncomfortably close to home, and a dark secret.

The Earth Hums in B Flat Details

Date : Published April 1st 2009 by Canongate (first published March 19th 2009)

ISBN : 9781847673046

Author : Mari Strachan

Format : Paperback 329 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Fantasy, Young Adult, Historical, Historical Fiction

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From Reader Review The Earth Hums in B Flat for online ebook

Gülay Cansever says

3,5 üstünden 4 verdim. Kitabın ba?? biraz kar??k geldi içine girmekte zorlandım. Ama sonrasında düzeldi. Gwenni çok çekti yalnız.

Robyn says

Didn't enjoy this at all, I feel tricked somehow by the synopsis! Really boring and a very weak storyline. Most of the book was spent describing old fashioned ways of living.

Bettie? says

Joanna Page reads Mari Strachan's magical story of a child detective, set in 1950s Wales.

From the BBC blurb:

'The Earth Hums in B Flat is a richly evocative, warm but unsentimental tale of a child detective struggling to piece together clues about the lives around her. These lives, and the characters who live them, are so vividly drawn and Mari Strachan's careful unraveling of the secrets they hide is extremely compelling. I loved this novel.' Catherine O'Flynn, author of *What Was Lost*.

Up here, far away from everybody, the night is peaceful; there's no sound except the hum of the Earth. At school, when I sang the note to Mr Hughes he said it was B flat but he laughed when I said it was the note the Earth hummed.

Gwenni Morgan can fly in her sleep-that's how she sees what's going on in the village, and how she tries to make some sense of her family and her world.

But Gwenni's mother isn't too keen on her daughter's imaginative ways of looking at things; she doesn't want anyone thinking her odd.

When Ifan Evans goes missing, Gwenni takes an interest in trying to help find him, much to her mother's distress, and uncovers a terrible truth.

Set in a remote Welsh village in the 1950s, The Earth Hums in B Flat is a story of dark family secrets. It's filled with wonderful characters and written with insight and sparkling tenderness.

Episode 1:

Joanna Page reads Mari Strachan's magical story of a child detective, set in 1950s Wales.

Gwenni Morgan is 12 and flies in her sleep. One night she sees a body floating in a pool and wakes to find that Mr Evans has gone missing.

Episode 2:

Gwenni starts her investigation of Mr Evans' disappearance by going round the village with a poster.

Episode 3:

Gwenni is interviewed by the detectives investigating Mr Evans' death and an arrest is made.

Episode 4:

The case is closed and Gwenni must put an end to her detective work, but not before a family secret comes to light.

Episode 5:

Standing on the cusp of adolescence, Gwenni finds out the truth about her grandmother...

First broadcast in 2009 on BBC Radio 7.

Felice says

I'm suspicious of adult novels told in the first person from a child's point of view. The child is never really a child. It's always a quirky little prophet machine. It's innocence a mask in place to reveal the hypocrisy of adults. This doesn't mean that there haven't been novels like this that I have enjoyed. The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time and The Sweetneets at the Bottom of the Pie come to mind.

Another book to add to this list is The Earth Hums In B Flat by Mari Strachan. Growing up in the 1950's in a small Welsh village twelve year old Gwennie is the 'odd' child of the community, not that she thinks of herself as that way. She sees herself as gifted: She flies in her sleep, has visions and takes questions from the Toby mugs in the kitchen. Is it that she has a good imagination? She also must very carefully navigate her Mother's mental instability and her peacemaker Fathers' enabling.

When the husband of a supportive teacher is found dead Gwennie takes the case. Her investigation unwittingly reveals the kinds of secrets that change lives but the real tension here is a more unexpected type than catching a murderer. As you read Earth and succumb to Gwennie's considerable charms there is a palpable suspense in what exactly Gwennie's mental state is. Is she a young eccentric who will find her way or are the same seeds that torment her Mother already planted in Gwennie.

Given my suspicions I didn't expect to think much of The Earth Hums In b Flat and I only read it because my friend Sasha encouraged me to. Well don't I have good friends? She was right. This is an outstanding novel. I was surprised the directions the story took. The impressive Gwennie is a wholly realized creation. Strachan's development of her characters is more accomplished than most established authors can muster let alone a first timer like herself.

Earth would make a discussion filled book club choice. The family dynamics, where do individuals fit into society, what's changed since 1950, the mysteries and Gwennie's fate would all be excellent talking points. It would also be a good book choice for more mature fourteen year olds (and up) that are ready for more adult

novels than are geared for their age group---and that is not to say at all that *The Earth Hums In B Flat* is a YA (young adult level reader) masquerading as a grown-up book....as so many others do.

Nikki says

(Final book for the readathon. Seventh book/eighth text. Finished the last third after the readathon ended.)

I don't know what I expected from this book. It's somewhat marketed as a mystery, I suppose, but that's a little misleading. The central character, Gwenni, isn't a precocious little child detective, a mini Sherlock Holmes. She's a slightly odd child, with a lot of imagination and a funny way of putting things, and about the complications in her life that begin with the disappearance of one of her neighbours.

She doesn't actually find his body, or track down and confront his murderer, although she does figure things out. The story is much more about the emotional journey. It's not a particularly light or fun one -- it's a hurting one, with a lot of pain and complex themes about mental illness. I found it a rather quiet story, oddly everyday, for all that there are horrible things happening.

One thing that bothered me was that the characters didn't feel the right age. It was part of Gwenni's oddness, I suppose, but she felt rather younger to me than she was supposed to be. I got used to it, but it definitely threw me off at first.

I loved how Welsh it all felt, at any rate. 'Tada' and 'Mam' and 'Nain' and 'Taid', and the turn of phrase, and... from the very first page, I recognised my own Welsh family in some of the characters and speech patterns.

I rarely offer advice about children reading books, since I was allowed a free hand with my parents' books and in the library from the age of eight, and don't believe it did me any harm -- still, it's not a comfortable, cosy book, and I don't recommend it for young/immature teenagers. If I were to give this to a young person, I'd be at the ready to discuss it with them, I think, due to the domestic violence and mental illness that's very much at the heart of the story.

Mark says

This book was a fascinating approach to childhood, eccentricity and the dangerous knock on effect of ill kept secrets. The narrator, a young girl called Gwenni, is attempting to pick her way through the ups and downs of that strange unknown hinterland of childhood moving into adolescence. Falling in and out of friendship, discovering boys but not particularly liking the discovery and over arching it all is her bizarre imagination and a whole host of phobias and worries.

Her family life is, to say the least, in mild turmoil with an unbalanced mother, an elder sister who sneers as only someone rising 14 can and a father who, though an admirably loving man (and we discover more of this as it goes along) you can't help but wish would be a tad more outspoken in his younger daughter's defence. However as the story progresses you begin to see the wider picture in dribs and drabs and as the fuller vision comes into view perhaps his reticence is explained.

Add to the mix violent deaths of varying types, the claustrophobic effects of small town life and a magic surrealism which i was not 100% certain whether it was real, in Gwenni's imagination or in my misunderstanding of the text and you have a really interesting book.

The story did not tie up all the loose ends and indeed a good number were left floating wildly and although that often leaves me on edge, here it seemed an eminently sensible thing to do. Not a happy book but a subtle thought provoking reminder of how our actions, innocent or cruel, foolish or wise, noble or cowardly may never stop having an effect long after we've ceased to recall them. And that what we intended to bring about by them may result in the opposite release or disaster.

Katy Noyes says

4.5 stars

Reminded me of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* - a murder mystery with a protagonist whose world view differs from that of the reader.

Gwenni is 13. She's smart but also naive and very imaginative, believing she can fly. Her mother, clearly with her own issues, worried that people will think her daughter mad. When looking after a teacher's young children, she becomes involved in their family tragedy, and vows to solve the mystery for them.

As Gwenni digs (to her mother's intense anger), she uncovers family secrets of her own too.

I doubt it's just me. From the beginning I knew pretty much what certain phrases referred to and guessed too what had happened. Gwenni takes much longer to close in on the truth. It's still lovely watching her innocent approach to detection and to the adult world around her.

The family secrets are also quite interesting as they are revealed. Gwenni is the most fascinating character in the book, and her mother and sister I disliked markedly. Very few other characters made a mark on me really.

There are wrong suspects and errors made, and insight into a post-war Welsh village and culture. I really would like to see Gwenni again, see how the experiences of this story affect her adolescence.

I read the audiobook version and enjoyed the lively and accented narrator, very well read.

Karen says

There were so many things I loved about this book, but I also thought there were some flaws which detracted from the overall effect. I thought the narrative voice of the protagonist was pitch perfect, and I thought her sweet innocence and perceptiveness were very believable for her age. I loved the precociousness of all of the children in the story - the scenes in which they bombard the young religion teacher with questions about life, human behavior, religion, and hypocrisy were beautifully written.

But I thought some of the adult characters were more one-dimensional. The father was too kind and

understanding (though I was certainly thankful for his presence in Gweeni's life), and I could not understand his utter devotion toward and protection of the mother. The mother's apparent mental illness (and/or worries that Gweeni was mentally ill like herself and her own mother) did not completely explain for me her increasingly rageful and cruel behavior toward Gweeni. And without more details, her allegiance toward Ifan Evans despite his known abusive behaviors was difficult to make sense of. I also wondered why she had insisted that Gweeni go to their home to watch the girls in the beginning of the story.

While I'm guessing the author purposely left the end unresolved (and while I think that in some instances this strategy can work), in this case I just felt unsatisfied. I wondered how Ifan ended up in the reservoir, and though it wasn't hard to guess possibilities of what had happened, the fact that Gweeni didn't wonder about it made it seem that the author simply forgot about this detail. And the mother's institutionalization felt in some ways like a cop out - I think it would have been more meaningful if she had been less impaired and if she found a way to work through her life story and develop compassion for Gweeni.

But all in all, this book pulled me in (I stayed up into the middle of the night to finish it), and I think Gweeni will stay with me for a long time.

Louise says

I liked this lots....Gweeni was a great character, with a fantastical way of looking at things....just everyday life around her seemed an adventure....

I began to wonder as the book went along if she really could fly.

All the trademarks of small village life were there, when other people know more about you and your family than you do.

Has to be said I thought it was fair obvious what had happened to Evans, but that didn't take anything away from the story for me....really made a point of how war damages people generation after generation, and highlights mental illness in everyday circumstances.

I was more than mildly amused by the non appearance EVER of aunty lol, who seemed like a larger than life character.

Enjoyed this so much, I ordered her other book before finishing this.

Patrick Neylan says

It's set in Wales. Don't forget that. Well, you can't. In fact, the author spends most of the first 100 pages painting an initially charming but eventually tiresome picture of an authentic North Welsh town in the Catherine Cookson-style long-ago-when-life-was-harder-but-the-world-was-better picture-postcard past. For instance, things are never white, they're "as white as the winter snow on Llapgoch" - just in case at any point you forget that IT'S SET IN WALES.

When the story finally gets going, it regains its charm and starts to pick up pace, even if the attempts to be warmly nostalgic are sometimes overdone. As our 13-year old heroine delves deeper into the disappearance of her neighbour, the ghosts of the family's past and the village's hidden history come back to haunt and threaten her world. The author eventually shies away from the darkness that threatens at one point to envelop the novel, but she banishes a lot of the sentimentality that looked like it might overwhelm her story before it

even got started.

It's written well enough for the reader to suspend his or her disbelief, but too many loose ends are left untied and too many plotlines are unresolved - even when the reader has worked them out, the characters never do.

It's a pity, considering how attentive she is to period detail, that the author slips up in just this area. We really shouldn't have to wait till nearly the middle of the book to know how old the heroine is, or when the book is set. And then the author seems to get it wrong by adding unnecessary references that are supposed to provide period detail but are inconsistent - such as Buddy Holly and the Busby Babes. Either the father inexplicably came home from the war a year early or the author has confused the two plane crashes: Buddy Holly (February 1959) and Munich (February 1958). And in a town so poor that meals have to be cooked over an open fire (Conan the Barbarian-style), the school implausibly has its own tractor to mow the playing fields.

It could have been five stars. It was very nearly two. But three stars is fair because ultimately it is an enjoyable book by a promising author.

Nicola says

This book definitely gets full marks for originality. I don't think I've ever read anything quite like it before. Both the writing style and plot were interesting and unique. I liked the setting a lot and also enjoyed all the interesting Welsh names. Gwenni was a likable enough character and she had an intriguing way of looking at things. The story moved a little too slowly for my liking though and I predicted the main plot twist from the start which was annoying. Most of the characters were pretty irritating and inconsistent and I didn't feel like Gwenni reacted normally to anything they said or did. Everything seemed to go way over her head. This may have been the point but I personally don't enjoy protagonists who have to have everything spelled out for them. Overall though, it was pretty good and certainly worth the read.

Stefanie Stokes says

I thought this was an interesting book. I picked it up in a charity shop because I liked the title and cover and thought it sounded interesting.

For me it felt a little short. We never learn the full story about Mam and Ifan Evans and why she still seemed to love him 14 or so years later even though he was abusive to his wife and possibly his children (they never did say what really happened to the twins).

I just felt the story was all a little too vague, with some things Gwenni investigated too much (asking around the houses trying to find Ifan) but with others it seems like it was all 'this happened but I'm gonna ignore it'. A good example would be her mother's behaviour. Even before the breakdown she didn't treat Gwenni very well, always complaining about her and scolding her for things that aren't her fault e.g. the girl throwing up on her.

One thing I did like was how when Gwenni was looking in the bible to find if animals have spirits for the old lady's fox scarf the bible didn't have any answers. One book isn't going to have the answers to every single question. Some of it has to come down to belief. If you believe an animal has a spirit it does, if another

person believes it doesn't then it doesn't. It's all about personal representation.

Overall an interesting book but not one I can see reading again therefore I am going to re-donate it to give someone else a chance to read it.

Carrie Hope Fletcher says

'Gwenni Morgan is not like any other girl in her small Welsh town. Inquisitive, bookish and full of spirit, she can fly in her sleep and loves playing detective. So when a neighbour mysteriously vanished and no one seems to be asking the right questions, Gwenni decided to conduct her own investigation.'

It was only by chance that I stumbled across this book and decided to buy it. I was supposed to be working and when I got there I got a call saying they'd moved the time we were meeting to an hour later. So I walked to the nearest high street, went into the book shop and bought this little gem and I'm so glad I did. It's a strange tale of a little girl called Gwenni from a small Welsh village who has an odd way of thinking to the rest of her family and peers. A man in her village goes missing and there is some speculation as to whether it is just a missing person case or if it goes deeper than the police originally thought. Gwenni has this delicious curiosity that I found myself feeding off of throughout the book. She digs through her family's past and uncovers secrets: some horrible and some that she can't understand why they were secrets in the first place. Gwenni also has this fantastic imagination. She thinks she can fly in her sleep and even though her neighbours and her own mother think she's 'odd', she continues to believe in her own imagination and the reality of it.

Gwenni's naivety is so refreshing and I found it quite uplifting to read a book from a child's point of view. Children's thoughts are so good and so in the interest of other people, it's sad to think that we all grow out of that and become slightly more cynical and less trusting of the goodness in other people. Her family is on the brink of turning upside down and even though it affects Gwenni so directly, she finds it easy to push herself back on her feet and cling onto the people that love her as much as she loves them. Gwenni finds the good in even the worst situations and it gave me such delight to read her points of view on the darkest of subjects. I very much hope that the author, Mari Strachan, actually knows a girl like Gwenni because I dearly want to believe there are people like that out there. If the real Gwenni is out there, I hope she grows up keeping that frame of mind and teaches others to do so as well.

Susan Roebuck says

Another favourite read for 2014.

One of the secrets of a great book, in my opinion, is the "voice". In this case it's the voice of a 12, getting on for 13-year-old girl. Yet, this is no children or young adult book, it's firmly in the adult field as the plot unfolds through the innocent eyes of Gwenni - a loveable and gifted girl who observes her Welsh village life, its poverty and hardships as perfectly normal. Somehow the narrator reminded me of a young Dylan Thomas with simple yet beautiful prose that brought the story and setting to life. I was also reminded of "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night" as Gwenni takes it upon herself to investigate, somewhat clumsily, the death of a villager. The reader will have to do some thinking too as it seems that all is innocence through Gwenni's observing eyes. And just why does the rest of the village call her "odd"?

Jo says

“Whales, porpoises, mermaids and mermen, dead sailors, fishes, crabs, tiny shrimps; the sea is forever full of eyes that watch me. I never fly far beyond the shore. If my town were a map the bay would have Here be Monsters written on it in golden ink.”

It always feels a cop out when I write a review about a book such as ‘The Earth Hums in B- Flat’ because I’m going to go on and on about how much I enjoyed it and you’ll read with wide-eyes shining, practically quivering with excitement because you want to know more and more...

[I may or may not picture everyone who reads my reviews reading them like that. *cough*]

And then I’ll be like: “SORRY! No can do, my friend, because if I say anything else the book will be spoilt and the only thing as bad as a book being spoilt is when someone pokes you in the side in the middle of a stretch.”

So I’m going to try and be clever and get you to want to read this book without me actually telling you *anything* about what happens.

Right from the start you are transported into post-war (I never actually got a hold of the exact date but I’m guessing late 50s because there is mention of the Munich Air Disaster) North Wales. It feels close and comforting and there are friendly Welsh people chatting with each other, making buttermilk and washing their front step. It is a wonderful setting; extremely quaint and rural and it almost made me feel nostalgic for not only a place I’d never been to, but also an era.

Everyone in this village knows everyone and everyone knows everything *about* everyone. There is a lot of curtain-twitching in this book. There’s just something about nosey neighbours that I love so much, don’t ask me why.

But all the secrets and the gossiping and the hearsay and the whispered rumours can only lead to two things:

- 1) Bad things happening.
- 2) A book that I couldn’t put down.

Twelve year old Gwenny was such a delightful and unique character. I simply adored her. But I guess that doesn’t really say much because give a girl an imagination and she’s already a million times better than a lot of literary ladies.

She’s inquisitive, she is clever and the people of her village and her family think she’s odd because she’s *different*. Isn’t that just the best way to be?

I just loved her. She went through so much and she still had time to be cute as a little button all the way through.

But it was the sense of family that really got to me in this book. Ms Strachan wrote these scenes impeccably. It’s all about family secrets, ancestry and it’s about finding out where you fit in amongst all that. My favourite parts of this book were the parts where Gwenny is creating her family tree. She goes around to her Nain’s to listen to stories about her family, goes and visits the gravestones of her relatives looking for their tales now forgotten and buried and then fills in the details with her bright pencil crayons.

But these families have skeletons in their closet.

Ms Strachan was able to really delve deep into the family dynamics and didn’t let you dare look away when things got a bit rough. And boy, did they get rough. Some scenes in this book were so tense I had to stop reading because I felt so claustrophobic.

All of these characters had secrets and a lot of them were broken and Ms Strachan plants you firmly in the midst of it. I really connected with all of these characters and I couldn’t make up my mind whether I wanted

to cuddle them, scowl at them, ignore them or throttle them.

All of the above, maybe.

The only reason why I'm not giving this book all the praise is because I worked out both of the major plot twist pretty early on. I think if anyone knows their historical figures will be able to guess at some things.

Ooooh, cryptic.

Also, some of the story-lines/character's situations were left unopened and I almost got the impression that the reader is just left to assume a lot of things. But given the clues/evidence/what-have-you we'd be given along the way and even the 'big reveal' at the end, there were still a lot of things that I was unsatisfied with. And one more thing (real spoiler guys.. skip if you have any intention of reading this book): (view spoiler)

[Wow, OK... maybe I didn't like this book as much as I thought I did. Maybe I was in a post-reading glow.]

But apart from those bits, this book was glorious and I would wholly recommend it to young adults and real-life adults alike.

Gratuitous Castle Picture.

I never actually got a hold on which town Gwenni lived in but I know it has a castle and it's across the water from Cricieth.

Which also has a catle but it's nothing in comparison to hers.

"In my sleep I have to fly up and up and up to avoid the gatehouse and the Red Dragon on our castle before diving again to the sands and the sea."

But it's still pretty impressive, no?

This review is part of Wythnos Cymraeg || Welsh Week. Find out more!

Liz says

WARNING: SPOILERS. ALSO, THIS BOOK CONTAINS SOME GRAPHIC CONTENT ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUICIDE THAT COULD BE TRIGGERS FOR SOME READERS.

This book makes use of a classic literary technique: we are presented with an innocent's version of events and we, the (older) readers, infer from it something far darker. Sometimes this is used to great comic effect, but here evokes pity and sadness.

The blurb on the copy I picked up suggested a mystery novel, so it was a great surprise to me that the mystery is dealt with very quickly. It hinges on the young protagonist, Gwenni, having no knowledge of the metaphor 'the black dog', i.e. depression (although I took it to mean anger in this case). To an older reader,

therefore, the disappearance of Ifan Evans is explained pretty much immediately: Gwenni finds Mrs Evans with a bloody mouth (she assumes this is due to a visit to the dentist) and the youngest Evans daughter, Catrin, talks of having beat her father's black dog with a poker to stop him being angry.

The rest of the book is ostensibly about the discovery of Ifan Evans' body and the subsequent search for the murderer, but the real interest lies in the slow unfolding of Gwenni's relationship with her mother, and the small Welsh community's quiet unravelling in the post-war years. Although never specified, the novel is set a decade or so after the Second World War, and so the weight of the losses from that conflict prove too much for some characters in the novel. People in the small town lose husbands, lovers, children, and hope - it drives one character to suicide.

The biggest discussion point for me in this novel is therefore the presentation of mental illness. One review, quoted on the cover of my copy, describes the book as 'blessedly unsentimental', which is one of its main plus points. The characters with explicitly-referenced mental illness (of which there are many) are described in a matter-of-fact way by children, who are often shown to be the victims of mentally unwell parents lashing out but continue to seek the approval of their parents. This is particularly true of Gwenni, who desperately tries not to anger her mother, although this ultimately proves impossible.

However, although the description of the mentally ill characters was matter-of-fact, the novel still seemed to distinguish between two 'types' of ill people: angry demons that lash out and need to be punished or locked up, and the innocents who are 'too good for this world'. This is partially because of the treatment of mental illness in the period in which the book is set. Depression is sidelined and ignored, with women, especially, just being dosed up rather than offered psychiatric help when needed. The sympathy in this book certainly seems to lie with the family and friends surrounding the ill people rather than the ill people themselves: Gwenni's father and Mrs Evans are portrayed as saintly and stoic and, I feel, lack a certain realism because of that. It certainly casts the ill people in a 'burdensome' light, which, although perhaps true to the time period, grates a little on me as a modern-day reader.

The suggestion is, as well, that there are many characters suffering from anxiety, depression and PTSD, but these are not specifically referenced. The sorrow felt by all characters in the novel is palpable and suffocating, and Gwenni can only escape it when she flies at night and, ultimately, whilst awake. This aspect of the novel is intriguingly vague: can Gwenni literally fly? Are her dreams portentous? Has she inherited this from her father, and does he still fly? What is hereditary and what isn't plays a large part in the novel, and is all the more poignant when twinned with the fact that some family ties prove to be more complicated than others. Gwenni's flight (and her mother's insistence that she not talk about it) is linked inextricably with the suggestion of hereditary mental illness, and leads the reader to question what is a child's imagination and what is the sign of a medical problem. However, I think it is more clearly a metaphor for Gwenni's burgeoning adolescence, especially when she rejects other aspects of her imagination at the end of the novel, such as seeing the Toby jugs in the living room as alive and watching her.

Gwenni is an imaginative child who enjoys writing stories; it could be considered a cliché, therefore, that she comes from a family with a history of depression. However, despite the problems I have with the presentation of mental illness in the novel, I do feel this is one of the more sympathetic portrayals I've read, particularly as the people living with the depressive adults are patient and keen to help. The portrayals of family life are nuanced and complex, although some of the key points of the novel (the 'black dog', for instance) are hammered home a little too hard. I would recommend this book as an interesting read, but don't delve in if you're feeling fragile yourself. It is pretty trigger-happy!

Emilie says

Minulla oli täysin toisenlainen käsitys tästä kirjasta. Kansikuva ei puhutellut minua, eikä takakansikaan niin suuresti innostanut. Silti tartuin kirjaan ja hupsista, tähän oli TOSI HYVÄ!

Gwenni

Gwenni on kirjan kertojääni. Erilainen ja ihanan mielikuvituksen omaava nuori tyttönen johdatti lukijan aluksi taivaalle nauttimaan fantastisesta lennosta sekä kauniista maailmankatselmuksesta ja pian taas takaisin todellisuuteen, mikä ei aina ollut kovin ruusuista. Gwenni ei ollut äidilleen kovin haluttu lapsi ja sai tuntea tämän useasti nahoissaan. Minua säälitti ja kauhistutti se, kuinka kylmästi Gwennin äiti suosi vanhempaa tytärtään. Onneksi Gwenni pysyi ihanan optimistisena ja sai tukea niin isältään kuin mummiltaankin. Silti kihisin raivosta, vaikka jotkut Gwennin äidin teot menivätkin hulluuden piikkiin.

"Se Alwenna on sitten hävytön tyyppi"

Alwenna oli Gwennin paras ystävä, jolta hän sai tietää kaikki kylän mielenkiintoisimmat jutut, sillä Alwennan äiti oli erityisen taitava kuulemaan kaikki tärkeimmät asiat ensimmäisenä. Voitte vain kuvitella, minkälaista juoruilua oli liikkeellä 1950-luvun kotirouvien keskuudessa! Pidin kovasti Alwennan röyhkeydestä ja minua säälitti Gwennin tilanne Alwennan paljastaessa kuiskattuja huhuja asioista, jotka liittyivät Gwennin perheeseen. Gwenni joutui käsittelemään vakavia asioita hankalassa iässä ja hänen ymmärryksen kehitystä oli jännittävää seurata. Oli myös mielenkiintoista seurata kuinka ystävyys suhde muuttui, kun prioriteetiksi tulikin pojat, entisten leikkien sijaan.

"Elämä potkaisee hampaille"

Kirjassa ei monenkaan elämä mennyt idyllisen muotin mukaisesti. Gwennin hyväntekijä ja kirjojenlahjoittaja Rouva Evans oli ihanan ystävällinen ja lämminhenkinen, toisin kuin Gwennin raunioituva äiti. Rouva Evans oli helpottavan tasapainoinen ja minua surutti hänen kurja elämä. Gwenni oli suloisen naiivi ja tietämätön Rouva Evansin todellisista huolista sekä äitinsä henkisestä romahtamisesta ja sen syistä. Tarina sai siis mielenkiintoisen ja lapsekkaan ulottuvuuden tapahtumien tarkastelussa.

Tuomio:

Gwennin maailma on ihanan maaginen ja ihmeellinen. Lapsekkain silmin järkyttävät tapahtumat saivat täysin toisenlaisen ilmeen. Suurten salaisuuksien ja järkyttävien tapahtumien välissä Gwennin joutui hämmästelemään myös omaa kehitystään. Erityisen ilahduttavaa oli Gwennin tyyli tarkastella maailmaa mielikuvituksensa voimin ja Walesilaisen perhe-elämän kuvaus, vaikka ruoka kuulostikin välillä aika karmealta. Tarina oli riipaiseva, mutta onnistui myös hymyilyttämään. Kirja oli siis suloisenkarvas!

Ps. tätä kirjaa lukiessa kannattaa varautua hyvällä teevarastolla. Teetä juodaan nimittäin jatkuvasti ja se maistui minullekin tavallista useammin :)

Jules says

Loved the idea behind this book, but it didn't quite end up being what I expected. I thought it was a bit slow

to start. I also found it a bit confusing at first. Were there too many characters being introduced at once, or did I just struggle to remember who was who because I'm not very familiar with Welsh names, I'm not sure. It picked up near the middle where it became more of a murder mystery, and I found it more enjoyable from that point on.

Rhi says

superb, absolutely superb.

i didn't want it to end, and dragged out reading it because of that.

welsh literature is my most favorite of genres, and this did not disappoint. full of all the good stuff, madness, murder, family, welsh tradition, and one superb little female protagonist. what is it that makes me love welsh literature so much? perhaps the nostalgia of tea time at my mam and da's, with a spread of bread and butter and cakes gallore. perhaps the phrases that really are still used today amongst my family. perhaps because they are always, in one way or another, a depiction of insidious insanity, and the idea that the insanity is very wide spread within welsh culture.

perhaps because i am proud of my heritage and the beautiful beautiful literature that comes out of it.

there is so much i could type, from the magical imagery, to the beautiful language - but it all feels void compared to the mesmerising beauty of this book.

for a first novel, strachan has made magic. i can't wait to see what she does next.

read it now.

Emily says

Really quite good, but somewhat painful reading. It reminds me in some ways of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* in that it's about an ultra-naïve child who decides to turn detective and is oblivious to the consternation she leaves in her wake as she goes about her investigations. A case could be made for an Asperger's diagnosis for Gwenni (besides her inability to comprehend other people's reactions, there's her extreme sensitivity to tastes and smells -- one has to read rather a lot about how she is not going to think about or look at blood, greasy meat, her mother's overly strong perfume, the glass eyes of a neighbor's fox fur piece etc). However, I think the author probably just meant Gwenni's quirkiness to indicate that she is more tapped in to the mystical world than everyone else around her -- she can hear the humming of the earth when she flies at night in her dreams. The evocation of a small Welsh village in the 1950s was well done, and the characters were quite real. This one will be sticking with me for a while
