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The Kin

Lillian Heil

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Dickinson, Peter. *The Kin*. Illustrated by Ian Andrew. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2003. ISBN 0399240225. \$24.99. 628 pp.

Reviewer: Lillian H. Heil;

Reading Level: Intermediate;

Rating: Excellent;

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Prehistoric peoples--Fiction; Survival--Fiction; Books--Reviews;

The Kin, originally published as four books, is a fascinating novel. It is set in Africa 200,000 years ago when, according to scientists, the first humans lived. Humans with and without language live during this time and intermarry. The book follows a group of children who are abandoned by adults since they travel too slowly. The children are likable and have different strengths. Suth is a leader, Noli has a keen sense of danger, Ko is impulsive, and Mana searches for peace. Together these children work to survive, find their tribe, and grow-up. "Oldtales," stories the children make up to explain the world, are interspersed throughout their adventure.

The story is well told with detailed descriptions of the food Nomadic people find in inhospitable deserts. Characterizations of the tribes are also vivid. The tribes are illustrated by the differences in non-language and language communication, as well as, the differences in women's behavior. The moral stance is best explained by Ko, who does not want his marsh friends hurt, and by Mana, who struggles with the realization that she killed a man in defense of her tribe. Resolution occurs when she adopts a baby of the enemy tribe and he is accepted by her kin. Mana sees this as a step towards peace, and in the last "Oldtale," all tribes swear-off the war oath.