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Beauty and the Beast

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Book Review

Title: Beauty and the Beast

Author: Mahlon F. Craft

Illustrator: Kinuko Y. Craft

Reviewer: Carlie Smith

Publisher: Harper

Publication Year: 2016

ISBN: 9780060539191

Number of Pages: 30

Interest Level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding



Review

This rendition of Beauty and the Beast by Mahlon Craft features elements of other retellings that may not be as familiar to readers. Beauty's relationship with her two sisters is explored in depth, and it is their selfishness that causes her to nearly lose the Beast. He has a softer heart and better intentions than other incarnations of the character. His imprisonment in the Beast's body is because of a mischievous fairy rather than his own wickedness. The traditional patterns of the rose luring in the merchant father, Beauty's self-sacrifice, the charm of the Beast, and the power of true-love's kiss in a magical castle are all generously described. The story is as enchanting as the first time you may have read this tale.

The great appeal of this book is the art by master illustrator Kinuko Y. Craft. Her style is inspired by the Renaissance painters and it shows in every stroke. The details are startlingly beautiful. From the texture of the royal French dresses to the gauziness of the fairy's wings, or the patterns in the Beast's fur, the intricate paintings easily transport readers into a new world. Craft rewards close study of her work with recurring references to fairies, the moon, and things of a personal nature like her German shepherd or Japanese heritage. Each time you look at the illustration, there is something new to enjoy. The effect of her artistic choices is to instill the text with another layer of timelessness, otherworldliness, and wonder.