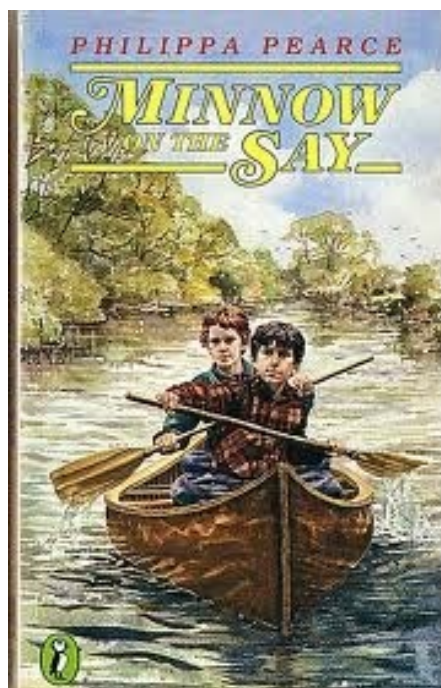




Minnow on the Say

Philippa Pearce

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David can't believe his luck when a worn wooden canoe mysteriously appears on the banks of the River Say behind his house. With summer stretching endlessly before him, it seems too good to be true.

Soon there is another boy--Adam, the Minnow's rightful owner. Adam wants his boat back...but something else, too: a trustworthy friend to help him find the long lost ancestral jewels that could save his family from financial disaster

Can two boys find what history has kept an untouchable secret for hundreds of years? Or will they lose the race against time and against another treasure seeker lurking at the river's edge.

Minnow on the Say Details

Date : Published May 25th 1978 by Puffin Books (first published 1955)

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Author : Philippa Pearce

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Genre : Childrens, Adventure, Classics, Mystery, Childrens Classics

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From Reader Review Minnow on the Say for online ebook

Mathew says

Set in the 1930s, this is a story of two boys from different classes who both come together to solve an ancient mystery regarding a hidden, family treasure. The two families, the Mosses and the Codlings are connected by the River Say whose secrets hold much more than fishes and reeds and the Minnow, a canoe which falls into the hands of young David Moss and leads him to the owner, Adam Codling, an older boy with a turbulent temper bent on preserving his family history and home at all costs.

These two very different boys make for an interesting pair in hunting down the Codling treasure and with the introduction of a mysterious competitor and a race against time, Pearce's story is a gripping one which, as always, contains absorbing characters and a real sense of time and place. Yet this is a story of mourning too. Not just of an idyll England when buses would stop outside your house door rather than at stops but one which remembers the Great War whose fallen are a traumatic scar throughout the story.

I would love to see this read as a class novel and think, if done well through drama and discussion it could be but it would need a passionate teacher and an immersive content. Although the story well-paced, very well written (Pearce didn't do bad books) and deeply touching, those readers who have little stamina might lose some focus in those final few, important chapters.

Potential Year 4 Text:

English: So much emphasis in the book on inference and prediction that it lends itself well to plenty of booktalk and drama. I like the idea of taking the children out to a similiar setting and getting them to write some descriptive sentences in a similar style to Pearce.

Central to the story is the Codling Riddle so there is chance to explore the element of poetry too and use this to hide objects around the school in which children compose riddles for others to examine and untangle. When they have been solved then they can go searching for them.

I can also see a lot of potential for script-writing based in the 30s and/or videoing scenes from the story in doing so. This can help bring a real attachment to the characters as well as a deeper understanding of the text. Children could write extended written scenes between key characters.

Maths:

Roman numerals are used within the text to look at significant dates within the book and offers an opportunity as a way to decipher a clue in the text. If applicable, I would relate this to the Codling's home being old and see if there are any buildings in the local town which still have Roman Numerals written on them to decipher. Books are important to the story too and children to look at those texts which begin with numerals prior to the main section of the book.

The boys do a lot of plotting and digging in the book whilst looking for treasure. There is an opportunity to hide some treasure in the local landscape too (or near a stream) and, using Google Earth, plot and divide sections of the land in order to consider area skills. With so much of the focus being on the River Say, creating bar charts and pictograms around a local river/stream and counting wildlife seen there as part of a larger, geographical study would not only bring the landscape in the book to life but also the children's connection with the locality.

Science:

In relation to the above topic, with The Say being so prominent in the story as well as wildlife (especially

birds) it would be beneficial for pupils to do some investigation around organisms living in the local stream. This could relate to food chains and classification of living things. From this they could consider what creatures David and Adam might spot on the Say when reflecting upon their own findings.

Art & Design:

Creating their own model canoes to see which ones float the best would be wonderful (especially if they could take them to the local stream and try). The children could name their own boat as the boys do in the book. Equally, I would love to see children sketching the local river/stream paying attention to flora. Here would be a good opportunity to focus on the work of British artists Paul Nash whose landscapes could be used as guides to their own work. Equally, his images of the Great War could be used to inspire war poetry and writing.

janetandjohn says

Yes, I am grown up. Yes I gave this 5 stars. Yes this is a book for children (but children of all ages). This wonderful tale of a canoe (Minnow), two boys and a hidden treasure enchanted me, and I suspect, many other readers. Have a go, it may do the same for you. The late Philppa Pearce was also the author of Tom's Midnight Garden, which readers may know of - but may I suggest that you find this one and read it. I was taken up almost immediately when the boy who finds the canoe, and the boy who is the rightful owner, find each other and become friends one long English Summer. Their adventures when seeking a long lost family treasure are just wonderful. The sort of adventures that any child worth their salt would want!

Amber Scaife says

After a flood, a boy (David) finds a canoe at his family's landing, and then finds a new friend (Adam) in the discovered owner. The two of them spend a glorious summer in the canoe (The Minnow), looking for Adam's family's long-lost treasure in an attempt to save Adam and his poor aunt from selling their house and moving away to live with cousins for lack of money. It's a race against time (the end of the summer holidays) and also against a wicked relative (Mr. "Smith"), who is also trying to find the hidden riches.

This one was wonderful. David and Adam and their river adventures, the mystery and suspense of the search for the treasure, and the lovely characters who fill the small villages where they live make for a happy and cozy read. I enjoyed it no end.

Ivana Neši? says

Letnja avantura, vožnja ?amcem po reci, lov na blago, porodi?na misterija, veliko prijateljstvo, sve!

Daleko više mi se dopala nego *Kad sat otkuca trinaest*, iako bi i po temi i žanru i svemu trebalo da je obrnuto.

Skye says

By the author of the better known 'Tom's Midnight Garden', *Minnow on the Say* is the summer holiday tale of David and Adam's search for a family treasure to save Adam from a fate worse than death: exile to Birmingham.

Written in the tradition of E. Nesbit's *Treasure Seekers* and *The House of Arden*, with a dash of *Swallows and Amazons*, it is beautifully crafted, superbly paced and very satisfying. As someone who spent a good portion of her childhood holidays messing about in boats, I particularly loved the early chapters and expeditions in Minnow. Very keen to read more Philippa Pearce!

Barbara says

Excellent old-fashioned childrens' adventure story. Took me right back to my childhood reading.

David Mears says

Though this book is probably written with children as its primary audience, it is crafted with as much skill as any adult could desire. The writing is perfectly paced, sophisticated, and beautiful. The small world in which the story takes place draws you in so much that it is an effort to recall that it has been dreamed up by a single woman. This is a very enjoyable book, relaxing at the same time as being enthralling.

Valerie says

I read this book for the ATY 2018 Reading Challenge Week 42: A book that takes place on, in, or underwater.

This is a classic children's book which takes place on a river in semi-rural England. How it celebrates the simple, easy life! Mostly it is an adventure story featuring two young boys and their boat during one summer. They are involved in a search for treasure, but more importantly, in the solving of a four-hundred-year-old family mystery. If the mystery remains unsolved, the boys will be separated and an old family estate destroyed. I have read this before, as an adult, but this time I guessed the answer before those in the book...at least, partly guessed it. This book will take you back to old times and days. You may even yearn for those days when life was much simpler.

LH Johnson says

It's odd to be able to describe a book as thick and dense with summer heat; a sensation somewhat removed from the cold practicality of reading the printed page, but *Minnow on the Say* somehow achieves that. It is a story full and dense with aching warmth and heat and slow, steady movements that occasionally jerk into something quite sharp and brittle and tense. It is a book that reminds us just how good Pearce could be.

Set in the area around where Pearce grew up, *Minnow on the Say* is the story of David and Adam and their summer-soaked adventure. They are looking for treasure and, inevitably, turn out to be not alone in this task. Soon the time comes when things start to get out of control. Treasure, it seems, has an awful habit of not being very easy to find - just when you need it to be.

Pearce writes so gracefully. She's almost stately; her text flows and ebbs and slides along the page, just doing what it needs to do at the right time, and it's almost effortless. The first paragraph is a perfect piece of understated scene setting and I hope you'll forgive me for repeating it here:

"David Moss lived with his family in the last house in Jubilee Row. Their house was like all the others, but their garden was something quite out of the ordinary: it ran straight back for the first twenty yards, like all the other gardens; then, when the others stopped, this took a sudden turn to the right, and in another minute, it had reached an unexpected destination. When the other gardens ended in a hedge, a fence, or a stretch of wire-netting, the Mosses' garden was brought to a stop only by the softly flowing waters of the River Say."

How - perfect - is that? The river, the way it practically sings with promise of adventure, the 'out of the ordinary' nature of the Mosses' garden and the way that this leads you, quite perfectly, to pay attention to David who lives in this different place and is therefore, by virtue of association, something quite different himself. It's a beautiful marker of allowing an environment - a place, space - to code you into reading the characters in a certain way.

Pearce's writing is a slow and subtle joy. *Minnow on the Say* is such a classic example of the golden age of British children's literature; it is a book which somehow seems to stand separate from its years and context to exist in a space of its own, a space that is replete with heat and excitement and the slow gentle curve of an oar into water.

Michele says

I have lost count of the number of times I have read this beautiful book with the exquisite illustrations by Edward Ardizzone. A story that is not without its melancholy, the tragedy of old Mr Codling is so well captured as are the long lovely summer days.

I can remember my mum seeking out a copy of this for me. Bought in Smiths Glasgow way back around 73. I have it still.

Peter Jamieson says

I'd give this 6 stars if I could. Supremely well-measured study of a Cambridgeshire summer, written in the 1950's. There's a cracking amount of tension in the story, which strains the relationships within it to breaking point. The twists of the story, following the cracking and re-cracking of a 16th century code in the search for a hidden family treasure, are beyond fantastic. The whole thing is alive - you can smell the summery river, and see the laze of dragonflies, and swirl of water cut by a canoe-paddle. A real, total, genuine pleasure to read.

Mumbler says

I'm not shy about giving books five stars here. To qualify this one more carefully - I think it's better than a lot of books I've rated a 4. It's pretty great. I just finished, so it's early, but it's probably not quite as good as Tom's Midnight Garden.

I suppose the consensus of reviewers already told you that. It's a lot closer than I has expected, when I read the quick description. It's not a time slip story, or supernatural in any way. But it does involve the past more than I expected, with the bittersweet tone common to the time slip stories I love.

And it has an outdoor adventure element, and exploration -- there are no maps, but there easily could be. And a quest, with a mystery to be solved. And maybe most of all, a friendship.

Some of those elements are different from TMG, some are shared, but in different keys, here. All of that makes this book a very nice complement, for me, to that deeper, sadder classic.

Andy says

Takes you back to an age in which children in books (if not in real life) messed about in boats, hunted for lost treasure and were always back for tea. It is beautifully written and well-structured. Every bit as good as Tom's Midnight Garden. I can't imagine children reading this today. They would have to slow down and expect to be less stimulated than they are used to: no-one goes into space, or steals the crown jewels, or battles against evil in a parallel universe. The countryside is populated by real people who actually live and work there. I am especially fascinated by Mr Moss. He drives a bus and can afford a house by the river and the leisure time to cultivate his garden. Another age entirely.

Katie Fitzgerald says

When David Moss first meets Adam Codling, he is only hoping the other boy might allow him to share his canoe, which accidentally slipped away down the River Say and ended up behind his house. As the two boys get to know one another, however, David realizes that he and Adam have not just the canoe to bond their friendship, but a mysterious Codling family secret involving a hidden treasure and an easily misinterpreted clue. Though the treasure hunt is mainly a source of summer fun for David, it is much more for Adam, whose family is struggling so much financially that he and the aunt who is raising him may have to move away from their beloved riverside home. David wants nothing more than for Adam to stay, and for his family to find happiness again, but with Codlings' about to be sold, there isn't much time, or much hope, left.

The Minnow Leads to Treasure (called The Minnow on the Say in the UK) is quite well-written, but unfortunately, the story didn't grab me as strongly as I had hoped. Philippa Pearce's Tom's Midnight Garden is one of my all-time favorite children's novels, and a unique and nuanced story, at that. By comparison, therefore, this straightforward mystery/adventure story just feels mundane. I also already have a good number of favorite mystery books involving British kids and boats (No Boats on Bannermere and The Big Six, for example), so I just didn't develop the same level of affection for these characters or this setting. There is nothing wrong with The Minnow Leads to Treasure, it just didn't rank as a favorite for me, despite my hope that it would.

That said, boys, especially, who are interested in boats and enjoy solving puzzles and riddles will absolutely love this book. The chapters are short enough that it would make a good read-aloud, and the resolution of the mystery and how it is solved are satisfying and mostly unpredictable, at least until pretty close to the end of the book. The characters are also likable and believable, as are the reactions of the adults to their insistence on tracking down the treasure. Honestly, I think I'd just recommend reading this book before Tom's Midnight Garden. That way, this one doesn't feel like a let-down and Tom's Midnight Garden can really blow you away!

This review also appears on my blog, Read-at-Home Mom.

Carol Aldred says

Slightly dated story but very good none the less. Good adventure with rivers, treasure hunt and smug baddie. Perfect
