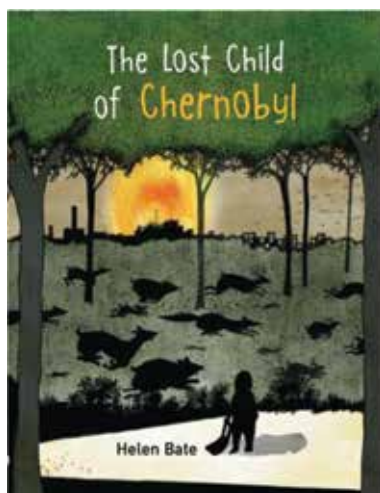


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The Lost Child of Chernobyl

By Helen Bate

Otter-Barry Books

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Those of us who are of a 'certain age' will remember the fearful images on the 7 o'clock news of a stylised grey cloud drifting across Europe. The world held its collective breath as we all wondered what might eventuate after the failure of a nuclear power station. Added to the fear was the fact that the disaster took place behind the Iron Curtain. The world wondered how much of the information we were finding out about the toxic cloud was true and what was censored by the USSR.

I was curious about what I would find when I opened *The Lost Child of Chernobyl*, a graphic novel aimed at bringing this important, but often forgotten, event in modern history to an audience in the 2020s. Would the novel create the fear and dread in its readers, as the actual event had created in the children of the 1980s?

What a surprise to find the story told from a distinctly human perspective. We follow the tragic event through the eyes of young Mischa and the elderly sisters Klara and Ana. With themes of survival and renewal, what could have been a bleak telling of the event

becomes one of hope and belief in the power of nature and resilience.

The book is a fine example of a hybrid genre incorporating the expected elements of a graphic novel along with maps to show the location of events, non-fiction elements informing the reader about the background, and the present and future of Chernobyl. Teachers will find many elements to engage students with links to the Humanities and English Victorian Curriculum. Of most value is the application to the historical skills aspect of the curriculum, such as analysing and corroborating sources and evaluating accuracy, usefulness and reliability. The text provides a valuable way of looking at analysing different perspectives of people in the past and evaluating different historical interpretations. Additionally, teachers can use the text as a way for students to examine cause and effect, continuity and change, and historical significance.

Whilst not shirking from the harsh reality, the novel leaves readers with a hopeful conclusion.