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Brendon chase book review

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All children (and adults) dream of breaking free from dull authority. I remember fantasizing about living like an outlaw as an 11-year-old, hiding in a hollow oak tree with rabbit fur clothes. But reality sets in: how can these boys really survive in the forest? Gradually, they learn to fend for themselves. It's not always pretty - they hunt, steal food, and face risks. The book is full of resourceful ideas and a joyful appreciation for nature. Brendon Chase is also a thrilling page-turner due to the constant threat that the boys will be caught by Sergeant Bunting, Reverend Whiting, or Sir William Bary. The story excels in sensory delights - wood smoke, discovering butterflies, or wild swimming - and shows how adults can rediscover these pleasures too. Children's writers often eliminate parents to create exciting stories. J.K. Rowling makes Harry Potter an orphan, while C.S. Lewis evacuates the Pevensey children from London. In Frances Hodgson Burnett's A Little Princess and The Secret Garden, the young heroines return from India without their parents. For me, a powerful motivation as a child was to escape school or church. I wanted to avoid punishment or boring lessons. Later, as a boarding-school teenager, my aim was to get out of church and roam the woods with friends. As the summer approaches, three country boys from a not-so-bad English public school concoct a plan to escape the classroom and live like Robin Hood in an eleven-thousand-acre forest. They spend a year hiding out in a hollow oak, defying parents, society, and conformity, and learning self-sufficiency and bushcraft. This tale of hide-and-seek is also a poetic evocation of the natural world, nostalgic for childhood freedom and simplicity. The author, famous for his tales of gnomes, brings a new level of realism to this story through the Hensman brothers' adventure. The boys' experiences in the wild, confronting its hazards and dangers, are just as compelling as those of the mouse-size gnomes. In 1968, the book's world may have seemed dated - the boys use outdated phrases like 'Rot!' and 'By Jove!', and even rob a rare honey buzzard's nest - but its vivid descriptions of the countryside remain unchanged. The story is full of memorable characters, from the absent-minded vicar who forgets everything in pursuit of butterflies to old Smokoe Joe, a gruff charcoal-burner with a gargantuan nose. The boys' nemesis, Sergeant Bunting, is also unforgettable - his humiliating failure to catch the boys leads him to strip down and float in the Blind Pool on a sweltering summer's day. At its core, Brendon Chase is about the fugitives themselves, their relationships, and how they grow and change during their adventures. The book remains a beloved classic, even today. When growing up, boys often grapple with their fears but also develop valuable skills. They learn to hunt, fish, and track, becoming attuned to nature. While this is an idealized portrayal, winter brings hardships, and they must fend for themselves. On a nighttime errand to the Dower House, Robin and his friends read books on outdoor pursuits. The writer, Brendon Chase, drew inspiration from childhood experiences described in his autobiography. Chase's own upbringing allowed him to roam freely with a wildfowling gun, developing skills that resonate throughout the book. Like Thoreau and Jefferies, he writes eloquently about nature, making it central to the story. The Reverend Whiting's butterfly hunt is a highlight, capturing the excitement of discovery. The narrator also learns about Chase's conservation efforts for the Purple Emperor, a vital aspect of his work. Chase presents a nuanced view on hunting and conservation, highlighting the importance of survival skills. He describes the process of preparing food from game, as well as his knowledge of plants and animals. His writing is engaging, conveying the sights, sounds, and smells of the natural world without talking down to readers. Through Chase's experiences, readers are immersed in a sense of being watchful and alive. The book's standout feature is its captivating illustrations by Denys Watkins-Pitchford, also known as BB himself. After training at Northampton School of Art and the Royal Academy, and a brief stint in Paris, he spent seventeen years as the assistant art master at Rugby before focusing on writing and illustrating full-time. For Brendon Chase, he employed black-and-white scraperboard to convey the forest's dappled light and shade. The illustrations are marked by deft scratches outlining a hirsute pig, John standing over it with his gun, and Robin climbing a Scots pine in search of the honey buzzard's egg. The scraperboard technique perfectly captures the monochrome worlds of night and snow, imbuing the scenes with a mysterious and mystical quality. The illustrations are as lively as BB's text, with each feeding off the other to express his exceptional powers of observation and connection with nature. His father was a vicar, but it seems that nature held a special place in his heart, even as he lamented its diminishing state under his gaze. The book has aged beautifully, with slightly yellowed pages and a tattered spine that only adds to its charm. I recently finished reading Brendon Chase to my ten-year-old son, Tom. It's a charming tale of three brothers - John, Robin, and Harold - who run away from home to live like outlaws in the English forest. They set up camp in an ancient oak tree and adapt to their new surroundings, facing dangers and excitement along the way. The book is just as delightful as its description suggests, with a joyful celebration of freedom, adventure, and being a boy. The English countryside comes alive, featuring herons, badgers, honey buzzards, and purple emperor butterflies. Although there are a couple of problematic paragraphs that might raise some concerns, the overall tone of the book is engaging and enjoyable. The author's enthusiasm for the book is infectious, and it brought back fond memories of reading to their son every night for ten-and-a-bit years. The bedtime routine became an integral part of their daily life, with a bedtime book being read together almost every single night. From simple geometric shapes to complex stories, they explored a wide range of books, including favorites like "Dear Zoo" and "The Very Hungry Caterpillar". As the family moved from the UK to Australia, their love for reading continued, and they discovered new authors like Alison Lester, who became a favorite. The author's account is a heartwarming tribute to the joy of reading and its role in shaping their relationship with their son over the years. The book I read to my son was Dixie O' Day, written by Shirley Hughes and her daughter Clara Vulliamy. This series is perfect for young readers - short chapters with just the right balance of text and pictures. Once we started reading chapter books, it was hard to go back to picture books alone. Tom had grown out of them, but not yet ready for more complex stories. We worked through Henry Huggins, The Worst Witch, Ramona Quimby, Age 8, and many others, excluding Roald Dahl's The Witches due to its scary content. Some childhood favorites of mine didn't interest him - Winnie the Pooh, The Wombles, and The Borrowers were complete misses. We made it through one Paddington but then stopped at his request. Reading is such a personal thing; there's no joy in reading to someone who doesn't want to be read to. I was surprised he showed interest in So Far From Skye, a book about the Highland Clearances that I'd read as a child and still had signed by Judith O'Neill. Over the years of bedtime reading, roles reversed - from him begging me to stay longer to him wanting to stop sooner. Our journey with Brendon Chase lasted almost four months; finishing it gave me an inkling that our era of bedtime books was nearing its end. When we finished Brendon Chase, Tom chose Chris Hadfield's memoir, An Astronaut's Guide to Life on Earth, and I wondered if this would be our last book together. Tom's reading journey was a slow one, but it marked an important milestone in his relationship with books. Initially, he struggled to read on his own, often resisting my attempts to guide him through the material. However, with time and patience, we gradually made progress, stopping at page 40 after several weeks of sporadic reading sessions. On some nights, Tom wouldn't even pick up a book, while others, he'd read before opening it, expressing his reluctance to continue. I reassured him that it was okay if he preferred to finish the book himself, and eventually, he agreed. Notably, Tom's reading habits differ from mine, with him often leaving novels scattered around the house and reading in unconventional places like the bathroom. He also reads multiple books simultaneously, with seven titles currently being pursued at once. Despite his unique approach, what warms my heart is seeing Tom read with unbridled enthusiasm and happiness - a true reflection of the gift I've given him as a parent: a lifelong love for literature.