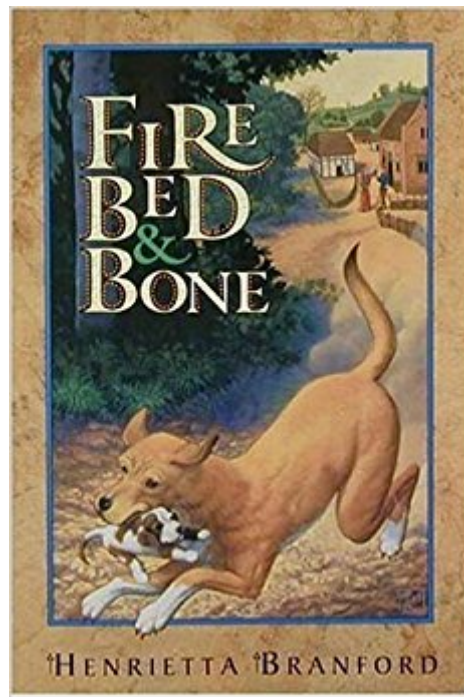


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Fire, Bed, And Bone



Synopsis

Henrietta Branford's gripping novel depicts the tumult and tragedy of the Peasants' Revolt in England through the eyes, ears, and nose of a dog. "I am not, nor ever will be, truly wild. Because I have known fire, bed, and bone. Because I am a hunting dog, a dog who must work with a man."...So says the old hunting dog who narrates this unforgettable tale. Living with poor but kindly Rufus and Comfort and their children, she has all a dog could ask for "fire, bed, and bone. But this is 1381 and unrest is spreading like a plague among the peasants of England, who are tired of the hardship and injustice they suffer at the hands of oppressive landlords. Rebellion is in the air, and life for man "and dog "is about to change forever...

Book Information

Hardcover: 128 pages

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Customer Reviews

What a brilliant book! This is set at the time of the 1381 Peasants' Revolt in England, and it shows the causes and events and results of that social upheaval in a way that is quite sympathetic to the peasants' side of the story without glossing over the mob violence that was involved. The book manages to be dense with factual information without being boring or preachy. However, the narrator is a dog -- a dog accustomed to a life of good care, with the comfort of the fire, a bed, and an occasional bone shared from the meager resources of its owners. And the dog tells us not only about the impact of social unrest on the people but also on their animals. The reading level is suitable for average fifth graders, but the issues are powerful and complex enough to interest older students of any reading level. This is a wonderful narrative of human events from an animal's perspective and should be placed along the classics of this genre.

I selected this for our book club (5th - 7th graders) because of the historical elements. Being that it's written from a dog's point of view (think *Wishbone*), I thought it would be lighter than some other historical fiction from this time period. But it was quite heavy with violence, including domestic violence. I think it was fine for the 7th graders, but probably too much for the younger ones.

In 1381, English folk rebelled against the oppressive system of serfdoms. Cruel lords and masters ruled villages of ordinary folk with no say over the heavy taxation and unjust laws. For a simple hunting dog, human politics meant little to nothing. As the canine friend to Rufus, a simple man, the old dog is happy to keep her place by the fire, take her master hunting, and sleep in the house. Everything changes shortly after the birth of her latest litter of puppies. Soldiers take Rufus and his wife, Comfort, away, leaving behind their three children. The dog ensures the children's safety and returns to find only one of her puppies has remained. Together, she and her young pup do their best to survive. She experiences freedom, captivity, and reunion, all in the names of love, loyalty, and survival. Originally published in 1998, *FIRE, BED & BONE* is a dog's observation of the horrors life sometimes presents us. This telling of a significant event in history is done in a way that will engage kids, teach them, and show them a wonderful story. Using a dog's point of view (there are no talking animals in this book) to portray the way of men is a powerful tool, and in this case, it is well used. This book should be a leading candidate for classroom use, as well as for simple reading enjoyment. The writing is easy to follow and sentimental without growing sappy. I definitely recommend this title. Reviewed by Christina Wantz Fixemer 10/26/2006

I ended up reading this book on my own rather than reading it with my kids. My 10-year-old is ready for this but not my 7-year-old. I did think the book was nicely written and gave a "you are there" perspective, which is why I love historical fiction.

Branford has crafted a powerful piece of historical fiction about fourteenth century England and has done so in a manner that honors the Young Adult audience's often ignored right to realistic, unromantic history. Her narrator, a wise, nameless hound is endearing but never cute. Through her eyes we witness the brutality and social upheaval of the late Middle Ages. This sage old dog, so unlike the traditional, overwrought animal narrator, provides a sense of detachment from events like the Wat Taylor rebellion that allows us to feel the peasant's righteousness as well as to cringe at their senseless mob violence. Above all, get ready to breath this one in. *Fire, Bed & Bone* is so

splendidly redolent with the real, visceral scents of the age that you will inhale it as much as you read it.

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