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Harklights

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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It would be hard to find a story more up to the minute than this. **Harklights** is a fantasy, written and illustrated by Tim Tilley, in which the organic and mechanised world are in archetypal conflict. Wick lives in an orphanage which doubles as a match factory ruled over by the dreadful Ma Bogey, who feeds the orphans a staple diet of porridge and whose punishment for those who get out of line is to throw them down the bottomless well. Wick escapes with the help of the Hobs, a tiny people who live in the surrounding woodland and are led by Pa Herne. The Hobs call themselves a tribe. They look after the forest and its creatures, talk in an appealing, possibly rural, accent, travel by blackbird, and welcome all comers, big or small; not unlike a friendly band of HS2 protestors (apart from the blackbirds and talking to wood sprites, I assume). They quickly become a new family for Wick, teach him the ways of the forest, including that even small people can make a big difference, and to observe the two forest laws: protect the forest and never harm a living thing. He even has the promise of earning the green cloak of the 'Forest Keeper'. Of course, life doesn't continue to be so pleasant for too long. A monster is chewing up the forest (and the Hobs). It must be tracked down and stopped; and the other orphans are still to be rescued from the match factory and the threat of the bottomless well. So, there's a lot happening in the last few chapters to sort these things out. To some jaded (old) adult sensibilities (well mine anyway) this might all be a bit pat and worthy. But you can hardly disagree with the sentiment and, as a way of introducing the under tens to enjoying and looking after nature, it's an enjoyable magical adventure.

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