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Madeline



Synopsis

"Bemelmans' drawings have put an authentic Paris within the covers of this book. The rhymes in which the tale is told make it one that children will enjoy repeating." The New York Times"

Book Information

Age Range: 3 - 7 years

Lexile Measure: AD480L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 54 pages

Publisher: The Viking Press (January 1, 1967)

Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 9 x 0.4 x 12.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (437 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,733 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #53 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Classics

Customer Reviews

I have had several occasions to read "Madeline" over the years, yet had never read anything about her. So learning that she had celebrated her 60th birthday was something of a surprise because I did not think of this first story of that irrepressible little girl as something that was first published on the eve of World War II. But the bigger surprise was learning that "Madeline" was not originally written and published in France, which I had always assumed was the case. That means all of those times I was reading this book and wondering what it would read like in the original French, I was completely off the mark. Live and learn. Ludwig Bemelmans was actually born in 1898 in that part of the Tyrol which is now known as Merano, Italy, and came to the United States in 1914. A painter and illustrator, Bemelmans contributed covers to "The New Yorker," and also started writing fiction. His first children's book, "Hansi," was published in 1934. A world traveler and true cosmopolite, Bemelmans wrote and illustrated "Madeline" in 1939 but had trouble finding a publisher because most editors felt that despite its humorous verse and simple artwork the book was too sophisticated for children (Soon & Schuster originally published the book, although the rest of the series would be published by Viking, Bemelmans usual publisher). Bemelmans named his most popular creation for his wife, Madeleine Freund, whom he had married in 1935. They had a daughter named Barbara,

who would provide inspiration for some of the Madeline books. Thinking that this book was originally written and published in France is a reasonable conclusion given all of the Paris scenes Bemelmans pictures in his book.

Having seen pages from the original version of the earliest adventures of Tintin and American cartoons from before World War II, I am aware that such works could often be racist and contain stereotypes. HergÃ© went back and redid his offensive artwork and the versions of those cartoons available today have been edited (or censored, if you prefer). So I was interested in charges of perpetuating stereotyping being raised here against a children's book that was written and illustrated by Ludwig Bemelmans in the United States at the time that the Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum. "Madeline and the Gypsies" first appeared, in a shorter version, in "McCall's" in 1958-59. As readers recall from "Madeline and the Bad Hat," next door to the old house in Paris that was covered with vines was the house of the Spanish Ambassador, whose son Pepito was reformed by Madeline (well, actually by a pack of dogs, but Madeline endorsed the whole thing). His parents are gone and Pepito invites the twelve little girls over a Gypsy Carnival. A cloudburst sends everybody home, but when the girls are tucked into bed Miss Clavel discovers that Madeline is missing. This is because at the top of the Ferris Wheel, stuck in the rainstorm, are Pepito and Madeline. He climbs down to get aid and the Gypsy Mama, with the aid of the strong man and the clown, get Madeline to safety. Explaining that "Gypsies do not like to stay--They only come to go away," the Gypsy Mama gives the drenched children medicine, puts them to bed, and takes Madeline and Pepito with her when the carnival leaves. Now, technically I suppose this IS kidnapping. But there is a long-standing tradition of running away to join the circus (Toby Tyler anyone?) and "Madeline and the Gypsies" is very much in that spirit.

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