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The Incorrigible Children Of Ashton Place: Book I: The Mysterious Howling



Synopsis

The first book in the Incurrible Children of Ashton Placeâthe acclaimed and hilarious Victorian mystery series by Maryrose Wood, perfect for fans of Lemony Snicket and Trenton Lee Stewartâhas a brand-new look. Discovered in the forest of Ashton Place, the Incurribles are no ordinary children. Luckily, Miss Penelope Lumley is no ordinary governess. A recent graduate of the Swanburne Academy for Poor Bright Females, Penelope embraces the challenge of her new position. Though she is eager to instruct the children in Latin verbs and the proper use of globes, first she must eliminate their canine tendencies. But mysteries abound at Ashton Place: Who are these three wild creatures? Why does Old Timothy, the coachman, lurk around every corner? Will Penelope be able to civilize the Incurribles in time for Lady Constance's holiday ball? And what on earth is a schottische?

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 850 (What's this?)

Series: Incurrible Children of Ashton Place (Book 1)

Paperback: 288 pages

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Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (171 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #27,078 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #35 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Animals > Foxes & Wolves #74 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Orphans & Foster Homes #277 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Mysteries & Detectives

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

When you're a parent or a librarian or a teacher or a bookseller who reads a lot of children's books, you sometimes wish for fun. Children's books are often by their very nature "fun". But there's fun that's strained and trying to appeal to everyone and then there's fun that appears to be effortless.

You read a book, are transported elsewhere, lose track of time, and never want the story to end. It's the kind of fun a person encounters in a book like Book One of "The Incurable Children of Ashton Place". In "The Mysterious Howling" you meet a book that's a little like "Jane Eyre", a little like Jane Yolen's "Children of the Wolf", and a little like nothing at all. Pure pleasure for kids, for adults, for everyone. Treat yourself. If you were to hire a governess from the Swanburne Academy for Poor Bright Females, you would find yourself with a young lady of exceptional talents, knowledge, and intellect. Such is the case when Lord Frederick and Lady Constance hire fifteen-year-old Penelope Lumley to be governess of three children. The catch? Well, they're not your average nippers, these three. Found on the sprawling acreage of Lord Frederick's estate, the children appear to have been raised entirely by wolves. Literally. Their new guardians have dubbed them "The Incurables" and are expecting miracles. Now it is up to Miss Lumley to get them civilized and educated or it's to the orphanage with them and unemployment for her. And there are certainly strange goings on at Ashton Place, that's for certain. Does someone have it in for the children? Where does Lord Frederick constantly disappear to? Is there something nasty lurking in the attic? Fortunately for everyone Miss Lumley is made of sturdy stuff, and it will take more than a mystery or two to keep her from fulfilling her duties to the fullest. Since the story takes place in the year when "Moby Dick" first came out, we can place the period of this piece somewhere around the early to mid-1850s. However, this does nothing to prevent author Maryrose Wood from leaping forward and backwards in time in terms of the narration. It is not uncommon for the story to say something along the lines of "nowadays it would make a fine documentary for broadcast on a nature channel on cable television" and then go right back into the past again. The effect is mildly jarring the first time it happens, but as it goes on the reader gets a feel for Wood's style. Books of this nature (which is to say, gothic books for kids) these days have a tendency to be compared to the works of Lemony Snicket. I would argue that there is very little in this book that is similar to Mr. Snicket's works, except perhaps the delightful vocabulary (though Snicket never seriously attempted Latin the way this book does) and the narrator's tendency to become a confidant of the reader. What is most remarkable is how well constructed the entire endeavor is. Ms. Wood manages to make the whole story fit together like a little puzzle. A Christmas party must occur on the night of the full moon since that is when guests will best be able to see their way. At the same time, perhaps there are other connections to full moons that we should remember. You never really see where the plot is going until it gets there, so predictable this book is not. Best of all are all the characters. Each one is unique, distinct, and memorable. Even the villains, such as they are, are sympathetic in their headstrong ways. And our heroine, Miss Lumley, is the kind of companion you'd readily follow through book after book. Just as

the children come to trust her, so do you, the reader. I suppose one might question whether or not this is the kind of book that actual honest-to-goodness kids will enjoy, as opposed to gothically inclined adults. After all, the heroine is fifteen and the story is about her occupation. That said, the real stars of the show are The Incorrigibles themselves. You cannot help but fall instantly in love with them the moment you meet them, and I can see many a kid identifying with them. And while the heroine of this story is a woman, I dare say that there will be boys out there who latch on to the whole "raised by wolves" aspect of the story and find it right up their alley as well. Sell this book to kids correctly and you'll find them (forgive me, but I managed to keep from saying it for this long) howling for more. Illustrator Jon Klassen is to be credited for providing the loveliest little illustrations to the story. Where some illustrators might have provided images that would make the book appear older, or more teen, Klassen's pictures actually give the story a younger feel. There is much that is adorable about this tale, and I think the artist captures that perfectly. While a reader is being charmed by the fact that the kids call Miss Lumley "Lumawoo", Klassen draws the children as bright, pert, and friendly. They often complement or clarify the action better than the book would alone. Even the author herself once said that the image of the children reenacting Longfellow's "The Wreck of the Hesperus" (note that Cassiopeia has lashed herself to a potted fern) might be her own personal favorite image in the book. Well, there's nothing for it but to love it, really. If I do have a beef with it, it may have something to do with the fact that you never really learn the answer to any of the mysteries that come up by the end of this story. Readers will be panting to know more (no pun intended) and then find that they have to wait to read the next book in the series before anything is resolved. Fortunately, they'll scramble to read that next book with very little prodding. For some kids, this will act as a follow-up to Lemony Snicket. For others, an intro to Jane Eyre. And for most, this will be the kind of story you read over and over again, just to taste the language and meet the characters again. Just the loveliest little book. One hopes we'll be seeing many more of its kind very soon indeed. For ages 9-12.

I was thoroughly excited to read this book, just based off of the name and the cover, and although, I would generally not recommend judging a book by its cover, this book proved to be wonderful. The premise is already charming, that there would be need for a governess to oversee children who happen to be raised by wolves. Beyond that, it's every bit fun that you would expect. The children adapt and learn quickly, but Wood makes them consistent to their wolfly roots, throwing in squirrel chases and conversations with housedogs. They seem like believable characters, as believable as children raised by wolves can be, I suppose, and all of the other main characters in the story are just

as ridiculous but lovable, as any good historical satire of Victorian society would be. Wood's writing style reminds me of the dry wit of Roald Dahl, and it's about time that we had books in that style again. I can't wait to read the rest of the series as it comes out, and I recommend this to readers 9+, focusing more on 9-12.-Lindsey Miller, [...]

When Miss Penelope Lumley, a recent graduate of the Swanburne Academy for Poor Bright Females, goes to Ashton Place to be interviewed for the position of governess to three young children, she's certain that she's found the ideal job. A knowledgeable governess who loves animals is being sought after, and Penelope is perfect for the task. But what she doesn't expect are the children's animal-like tendencies, a direct result of being raised by wolves. Rather than flee Ashton Place, Penelope is determined to stay on and teach the children all she can. But it is rather difficult to do so when she must first teach them proper hygiene and etiquette in preparation for the holiday ball to please their benefactors, all the while wondering where on earth the children came from and why certain people are perhaps too interested in them. *The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place* is a charming and unconventional tale. It's told in an authentic and highly entertaining voice that lends itself to the setting of the novel, sophisticated and proper, yet very entertaining and accessible to younger readers (for example, when discussing a tableaux vivant, the narrator says, "No doubt this will sound dull to the modern viewer whose tastes have been shaped by more advanced forms of entertainment featuring zombies and so forth..."). These little references to more modern items are a bit surprising at first, but they are few and far between. The characters are of course eccentric, from the three Incorrigibles Alexander, Beowulf, and Cassiopeia and their quirky, canine, and squirrel-chasing tendencies, all the way to the lord and lady of Ashton Place. In the middle of it all, Penelope is a clever and resourceful heroine with gumption and smarts who isn't easily cowed. The mysteries interwoven in the novel are also quite fascinating, for they concern not just Ashton Place and the Incorrigibles, but their plucky governess and her past as well. Though not many answers are revealed, the book is never predictable nor boring, and by the time you are through, you will be in love with the Incorrigibles and Penelope. *The Incorrigible Children of Ashton Place* is a genuinely fun and engaging Gothic book that may be tilted at kids, but anyone will enjoy it.

These are well-told tales, and a fun read. However, the books read more like individual parts/sections of one novel. There is no clear resolution at the end of any of them - all of the books are a single tale, not a 'series.' We often pick up the first book in a series just to see if we enjoy the writer - get to the end, and if you're not hooked, don't get more. In this case - that would have felt

like reading half a book, and been very disappointing. Plan to read the whole set, or not at all.

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