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I Wish I'd Written... The Stones are Hatching

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Linda Newbery chooses Geraldine McCaughrean's **The Stones are Hatching**.

Linda Newbery on Geraldine McCaughrean?s **The Stones are Hatching** , a book full of brilliant, memorable description? <!--break-->

From page one, you?re in the hands of a superb storyteller. Phelim, reluctant hero, is called on to defeat the Stoor Worm which has been awakened by the heavy guns of the Great War. Unknowingly, he?s the Green Man of rural legend, soon joined by his prescribed companions, the Horse, the Fool, the Maiden, though none of these is quite what you?d expect. Phelim?s journey is as eventful as the Ancient Mariner?s, with all manner of threats and dangers ? the Washer at the Ford who scrubs bloody shirts, the Noonday Twister who bewitches harvesters, Merrows who trap the souls of fishermen in lobster-pots.

I gave my review copy to an appreciative friend and bought another for myself. The writing is so marvellous that you can open the book at random and find a brilliant, memorable description. Here are the trapped fishermen: ?... *Murdo and his neighbours, keening and bemoaning their eternity pent up in little cages, watching the cold, dirty sea roll over a dead village. Here were the old men on the jetty, not up there, propped up on bollards or beside cold cups of tea.?*

It?s a horror story, an elemental struggle, a road movie, an environmental fable, a search for identity. I wish I?d written it.

Geraldine McCaughrean?s **The Stones are Hatching** is published by Oxford University Press, 0 19 271797 9, £5.99 (see review on page ??).

Linda Newbery?s latest book is **Flightsend,** Scholastic Press, 0 439 01175 2, £5.99 pbk (see review in **BfK 118**).

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