



[Home](#) > In the Nick of Time

In the Nick of Time

Books Reviewed:

[In the Nick of Time](#) [1]

Issue:

[163](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Valerie Coghlan](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

Children from congested slum areas in Britain were sometimes sent to open air schools during the early and mid-twentieth century. The classrooms in these schools were mostly without walls and dormitories were very well-ventilated as a means of keeping the dreaded tuberculosis at bay. When Charlie, a child of the 21st century, jumps on some old stepping stones in Cold Tarn Woods near her home, she suddenly finds herself in the 1950s and mistaken for a new girl at Cold Tarn Open Air School.

Charlie tries to explain her predicament, but in spite of her digital watch and hoodie, the Cold Tarn teachers persist in believing that she is Joyce, a child of their time who is just being uncooperative. But Jack, a free-spirited lad from a children's home, believes that like him, Charlie is different, and they run away together to find the real Joyce.

Readers may find it difficult to believe that the teachers are not more aware of something different about Charlie, but Swindells helps the suspension of disbelief with a careful leavening of information about the early 1950s and enough action to keep the story moving along. Even when the real Joyce is found, Charlie is then deemed to be in need of psychiatric help.

A 21st-century family drama ticks over in the background and at the finale a link is made between Charlie's excursion into the past and her present life to which she returns. Children with a curiosity about the past and a liking for mild adventures will enjoy Charlie's story, which it must be said, deserves better proof-reading.

Running Order:

38

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Links:

[1] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/in-the-nick-of-time>

[2] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/163>

[3] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/valerie-coghlan>