



[Home](#) > Dog Andy Mulligan

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# Dog Andy Mulligan

Books Reviewed:

[Dog Andy Mulligan](#) [1]

Issue:

[228](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Nicholas Tucker](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

This edgy, unsettling story features talking animals and their various relationships with the human world. Even fleas and moths are granted adult understanding and voices, yet at other moments they behave like the animals and insects they are. This paradox sometimes jars, as when Spider, the supremely intelligent and articulate dog of the title, suddenly and inexplicably decides to wreck his young master's room, thereby putting everyone in grave danger. But Mulligan is a good writer and always manages to convince. He treats his motley cast of characters with a cool detachment reminiscent of a Russell Hoban or Richard Jefferies, spinning his fictional web with all the skills of Thread, a malicious spider who is another main character.

Human-animal stories often tend to end happily on a note of mutual congratulation, species to species. This story ends cheerfully too after some last moment melodramatics it could have done without. But it remains a troubling tale. Descriptions of general misery accompany moments of terrible danger arising from bullying, misunderstandings and a capacity on both sides, human and animal, to do the wrong thing without wishing to. There are also questions that are not always answered. Is it fair to blame the spider for capturing and torturing a moth? Are there really industrial plants that melt down stray animals into pet food? If Tom, the eleven-year-old hero of the story, won't talk to his estranged mother when she phones every day for six months, how about a home visit? But never mind; this is still good, original writing that in every other way remains grippingly readable right through to the end.

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[1] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/dog-andy-mulligan>

[2] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/228>

[3] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/nicholas-tucker>