



BROWSE



## Fishbone's Song by Gary Paulsen (review)

Karen Coats

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REVIEW

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**In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:**

Reviewed by:

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*Karen Coats*

The unnamed narrator of this lyrical tribute to living off the grid has at least four different origin stories explaining how he came to stay with his elderly guardian, Fishbone. However he came to belong to Fishbone, the boy is cherished there, and he grows up listening to Fishbone's stories about serving in Korea, running 'shine and racing stock cars after the war, falling in unrequited love, and eventually coming to live alone in the small cabin in the woods, where he passes on his stories along with simple blues lyrics that distill the experiences into tight nuggets of hard-earned wisdom. The boy's narration has a touch of blues rhythm as well, with simple repetitions that expand and flow into reflections on how to make a working bow, what it means to be a hunter, how it feels to be one with the surrounding woods, and how one day his life will go on without Fishbone. It's a cadence that not every reader will appreciate, but those with an ear for poetic prose and an appreciation for natural beauty unmarred by screens and other technologies will find gems of oral history and enduring lessons embedded in Fishbone's tales. A readaloud is perhaps the best conveyance; a masterful performance would include careful development of character voices and perhaps even old-timey musical accompaniment, and the results would fully transport listeners to another place and time.

**ORCHARD, ERIC** *Bera the One-Headed Troll*; written and illus. by Eric Orchard. First Second, 2016 126p  
ISBN 978-1-62672-106-7 \$17.99 R\* Gr. 3-5

Bera doesn't mind having only one head, or being a pumpkin farmer, or living a quiet, humble life. When she hears a baby's cry, though, Bera becomes the hero she never dreamed she could be, saving the baby from mermaids, a witch, other trolls, and more on her quest to find this tiny human a forever home. Bera's plenty afraid to leave her little corner of the world, but her quest to be honorable outweighs her desire to remain safe, and she even has the insight to see how she can't be truly safe when others, like this vulnerable baby, can be so thoughtlessly harmed. This is a gorgeous little graphic novel, with cream, pale orange, and black as the primary colors; these choices establish the otherworldliness of the setting and also reinforce the sleepy, dreamy vibe of a book that takes place almost exclusively at night (the protagonist is a troll, after all). The creatures Bera encounters and the breathtaking geography she traverses are undoubtedly inspired by Norse tales and locations; the author ably ties legend and his own imaginative elements together with ease. Fans of Orchard's *Maddy Kettle: The Adventure of the Thimblewick* (BCCB 1/15) will find more to love here, as Bera resembles Maddy in being a mix of quiet fierceness and compassion and in being driven by a focus on family as home, no matter what the definition of family might be. AS

**PAULSEN, GARY** *Fishbone's Song* Simon, 2016 [160p]  
ISBN 978-1-4814-5226-7 \$16.99  
Reviewed from galley

R Gr. 6-9

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**PERI, ERICA S.** *The Capybara Conspiracy*. Knopf, 2016 [192p]  
Library ed. ISBN 978-0-399-55172-7 \$19.99  
Trade ed. ISBN 978-0-399-55171-0 \$16.99  
E-book ed. ISBN 978-0-399-55173-4 \$10.99  
Reviewed from galley

R Gr. 4-7

Seventh-grader and aspiring playwright Olive Henry stars in this three-act play about a missing mascot. Scene One opens with Olive in the principal's office, eyeing up



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