



## Ballet Shoes

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*An alternate cover edition for this ISBN from 1993 can be found here*

Pauline, Petrova and Posy are orphans determined to help out their new family by joining the Children's Academy of Dancing and Stage Training. But when they vow to make a name for themselves, they have no idea it's going to be such hard work! They launch themselves into the world of show business, complete with working papers, the glare of the spotlight, and practice, practice, practice! Pauline is destined for the movies. Posy is a born dancer. But practical Petrova finds she'd rather pilot a plane than perform a pirouette. Each girl must find the courage to follow her dream.

## Ballet Shoes Details

Date : Published September 2003 by Yearling (first published 1936)

ISBN : 9780679847595

Author : Noel Streatfeild , Diane Goode (Illustrator)

Format : Paperback 233 pages

Genre : Childrens, Classics, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Ballet Shoes for online ebook

### Cora ? Tea Party Princess says

Perfect for Christmas, not convinced by the narrator.

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### Sara says

Every child should have the joy of reading this book. I am so sad that most of her books are out of print and very difficult to find. I'm very glad that this one and a couple others are available. This book is charming and wholesome and funny and full of good lessons for young children. I would buy every single Streatfeild Book that came into print. And I would buy multiple copies so that my children could have their own sets.

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### Calilibrarian says

I had two career goals as a little girl--I would be a ballerina...or a librarian, heh.

Well I started ballet at three and continued through college, but alas never made it to the big stage. I am a librarian though so go figure.

I loved these books so much as a child. All of her series that I read I should say, but especially ballet shoes. This is a fascinating vanished world.

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### Briar Rose says

Ballet Shoes is one of those books I wish I'd been able to read as a child. I would have loved to experience the lives of the Fossil girls through a child's eyes, and to have grown up with them.

Noel Streatfeild's beautiful book bewitched me with its simplicity, charm and humour. I was drawn in by the lives of Pauline, Petrova and Posy, empathising with their struggles as they grew up; laughing and crying with them over their successes and failures. Like the best children's stories, even though it's now more than three-quarters of a century old, it has hardly dated. Indeed, it seems like the passing years have only added to its charm, as all the little details of life in 1920s England give it a wholesome, almost fairy-tale like quality. (It's interesting from a historical perspective as well to read about the lives of child performers during the inter-war era). The book has the perfect blend of the ordinary (meals eaten, lessons taken, sewing dresses, making toffee and taking walks) and the magical (an explorer uncle who vanishes mysteriously, orphan children rescued from the Titanic and the Russian revolution, the huge cast of parental figures they have to protect and guide them).

There's also the theme of poverty which, much like in The Secret Garden, runs as a darker current throughout the book. Streatfeild definitely comes down on the side of those who believe that a little hardship is good for children, and that working for a living at the age of 12 is no bad thing. Although her characters live in a pre-Depression era, the book was written in 1936, so hard work, thrift and charity are continuously held up as virtuous traits - though Streatfeild is never didactic, and never preachy. As in all the best children's books,

she instructs by delivering a compelling story and making us fall in love with the virtues and lives of the characters.

Of course, in the character of Winifred - the talented but mousey girl who never gets the part - we see the dark side of poverty; unlike the well-cared for Fossil children, her family is truly poor and there isn't much hope that she'll end up with a successful career. She is the sad, dark mirror of the challenging but ultimately happy lives of the Fossils.

There is perhaps, in the inevitable return of Great-Uncle Matthew (coinciding as it does with the the changing fortunes of Posy and Pauline), a little too much of the *deus ex machina*, but that's what we expect from a children's book isn't it? I'm willing to forgive it in the delight of reading a well-told tale.

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### **Adela Cacovean says**

Originally published in both ENG and RO on my blog:

<http://vanillamoonblog.com/2013/02/22...>

I must admit that what first got me interested in this book was seeing the movie with Emma Watson as Pauline in 2007. However, six years have passed until I actually decided: I want to read this book. Another important factor in my decision to read it was also the Pre-1960's Classic Children's Books Reading Challenge hosted by Turning the Pages I am participating in this year. But how and why I read this book is not as important as how great it turned out to be!

From the first sentence, I felt transported to the time I was ten and reading books like "The Secret Garden" or "Little Women". There is a certain feel these old children's books have and nostalgia accompanied me until the last page. It seems that my fear of not liking children's books at my age was unfounded.

"If other girls had to be one of us, which would they choose?"

Pauline was by far my favourite character, perhaps because she was the oldest of the three children, and thus more mature, a leader if I can call her like that. Rational, ambitious, learning from her past mistakes, unaware of her beauty and ready to sacrifice her savings to help paying the bills, the much needed clothes and so on...

However, the mystery of this novel is Posy. The book mostly follows Pauline's evolution, and as Petrova is usually in the same theatrical pieces as Pauline is, we don't get to "see" much of Posy. Her training with Madame Fidolia is kept under secret too, so we can only guess what kind of ballet moves she is taught.

The book is mostly about how these three girls are growing up, balancing studying, training for their careers and actually working as performers on stage. It is, consequently, slow-paced and descriptive, however it doesn't lack in humorous moments. For instance, when Gum (Great Uncle Matthew) brings the orphan Pauline to her 16 year-old niece, Sylvia, who is reluctant in taking her, he says:

"I thought all women like children!"

Posy is also a "little monster" who mocks everyone's behaviour by imitating them in a hilarious way, a "talent" of her most visible in the second half of the book.

I recommend "Ballet Shoes" to children of all ages, and to adults who want to remember their childhood.

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### **Kressel Housman says**

The story of Pauline, Petrova, and Posy will be in my heart for life, even though I must confess that was introduced to these charming and unforgettable characters from the 1975 British television version. That kind of ruined me for the book; all I'd do was nosh through my favorite scenes. Only when I was in my 20's did I read it cover to cover when I introduced its pleasures to a girl I was tutoring.

Pauline, Petrova, and Posy are three adopted girls being raised in London in the 1930's. Because of the Depression, they get training to earn money as performers on stage. Pauline turns out to have a flair for acting, and Posy turns out to be a ballerina of rare genius. Petrova hates the stage, and goes along with it only because she has to. Her dream is to learn to fly an airplane.

It's a very different experience to love this book at age 10, read it at age 20(ish), and think about it at age 40. As a girl, I dreamed of being Posy, but I identified with Petrova, if only because of her Russian background. In my 20's, I was struck by how selfish Posy was about her art. But now in my 40's, and as a (professional?) writer, I understand that inspiration IS selfish. When you have something to create, it just takes over your life.

But all this reminiscing has given me other thoughts, too. For one thing, I think the ending has a really positive message to girls, especially starry-eyed ones who dream of the glamor of a stage career. There's a difference between being famous and making history.

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### **Cora ? Tea Party Princess says**

#### **5 Words: Classic, Christmas, talent, family, dance.**

This is one of my FAVOURITE books ever. I read it year on year, often more than once, and I never get bored. How could I?

Ballet Shoes follows the Fossil sisters and their journey through life as they try to get their name into the history books because of who they are.

It's a book that always makes me smile, that could cheer me up on the most miserable of days. And it has this kick-ass thread of girl-power throughout, a discreet hint of feminism that makes you root for Petrova.

And this edition? It's gorgeous. I think I have about 5 copies of this book and this one is by far the most beautiful. And Christmas-sy.

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### **Kristen Boers says**

My mother doesn't like to read. She's just not that into it, never has been. I, on the other hand, read every day and have, ever since the age of 6. Imagine my surprise, as a 10 year old, when she gave me a copy of "Ballet

"Shoes" and told me it was her favorite book as a child. During this time, I was obsessed with C.S. Lewis and reading "The Voyage of the Dawn Treader" for what felt like the 40th time. But, still, my mother had given me a book, so, the least I could do was read it, right?

I'm writing this review after re-reading "Ballet Shoes" yesterday. My friends Bill and Elaine have a four year old who I sometimes watch for them, and I was trying to think up creative alternatives to watching "Ratatouille" for the 17th time. So, I started rifling through my old books and the Fossil sisters literally fell into my lap. I read the first few pages, laughed more than I remembered laughing as a child when GUM says to his 16 year old neice Sylvia "I thought all women liked babies?" as he presents her an orphan he's recently rescued.

Like the best children's fiction, "Ballet Shoes" not only holds up well with age, but becomes a completely different book when you revisit it as an adult. The book was published sometime in the 1930's, and while mostly conservative, features two female professors who are unmarried and lived together. If a book published today featured characters like that, it would be all over the media and banished from some elementary schools. What is lovely about Streatfield's writing is that, as a child, it didn't even occur to me that it would be unusual for Dr. Jakes and Dr. Smith to live together and not be married. And as an adult? It matters even less. Dr. Jake's Shakespeare obsession and Dr. Smith's gentle nature are far more interesting as to what these women do when they're not teaching the Fossil sisters.

The last line of the book "If other girls had to be one of us, which would they choose?" was a question I pondered many a nights as I drifted off to sleep. Sweet, , people pleaser Pauline? Stubborn, pragmatic Petrova? Self involved, brilliant Posy? As a child, my answer was almost always Petrova, not wanting to seem conceited or over ambitious. But as an adult, I don't know that I could decide. I should read the book again before I made a decision.

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### **Miriam says**

One of my two favorite of Streatfield's "Shoes" books. A children's novel from the 1930s about three adopted sisters, poor but talented, who attend a dance and stage school in London. They have a guardian who turns her home into a boarding house to make a living, and most of the other characters live there.

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### **Cathy says**

Thank you, Kathleen Kelly, for alerting me to the existence of this book. This was really cute and heartwarming.

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And I think it's probably time I watch *You've Got Mail* again.

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### **Mimi says**

Reading this just made me happy. Ridiculous, but true.

It's really a lovely book, with strong, sensible characters.

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### **Cora ? Tea Party Princess says**

Aww man. I always feel like crying when I finish this book.

Full review to come.

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### **Anny says**

This is probably the first book ever where I cannot say 'The book is better' straight away. First of all, it is clear that the book is for children and the film is for the grown ups. But the beauty remains in both.

Pauline, Petrova and Posy are sister by 'accident' as they were all adopted by a wealthy and nice uncle Matthew (whom they called Gum, because Great Uncle Matthew. G.U.M.). After he brought the youngest Posy home, though, he disappeared. There was enough money in the bank for a couple of years, but it was not enough and soon, they ran short of it. The sisters were all talented. Pauline could act and recite and Posy wasn't very far from being a professional ballerina. And Petrova was incredibly clever, although she was interested in cars and engines instead of performing arts. As the girls grew up, they decided to act for money, so they could support their poor household. They have made a vow regularly, because they believed they could achieve great things. And because their names were unique, no one could say it was because of their grandfathers. But the way towards their dreams isn't always easy.

It is fairly obvious that some changes were required, so the film could be a family-friendly one. So that parents would not be too bored. But to be honest, I liked the change. I enjoyed the relationship and the mild romantic tension between Garnie and Mr Simpson and I really missed that in the book. But I do understand that children might really not find that very interesting. On the other hand, I'm really sad the part with the Blue Bird play wasn't in the film as I think it could have been done in a really nice way.

To conclude, I would say that the book is probably as good as the film, but it's still leaning towards the statement that the film is a little bit better. But it is a purely subjective view, because I'm very sensitive towards films like this...and come on, this one has even got Emma Watson in it!

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### **Carre Gardner says**

Remember the scene in "You've Got Mail" where Colleen Kelly (Meg Ryan) is sitting in the children's section of the newly-opened Foxx Books, and a customer comes in looking for the "Shoes" books by Noel Streatfield? The clerk has clearly never heard of them, but Colleen has, and she tells the customer that "The Ballet Shoes" is definitely the one she should start with...

This is that book.

In the twenty-first century, a particularly cynical reader might accuse the book of containing certain tropes that have become so common as to be considered cliche these days: The plucky British orphans; the valiantly struggling relation; the general bonhomie of the outside world, which makes everything somehow bearable; the happy ending.... Yet note that I've awarded this an unequivocal 5 stars. That's because, sugary it may be (and is) but darn it, there are just some days when you're in the mood for sugar. And plucky British orphans. And happy endings. And if you happen to be in such a mood on the day you read this book (or listen to the audiobook version, as I did,) then you're in for a five-star treat.

Makes you believe the world is jolly good at that, old chum. Pour me another cup of tea.

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### **Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says**

It's not great fiction. It's not classic children's fiction. But it wasn't meant to be, not even at the time. It's meant to be fantasy wish fulfillment for little girls, who like the three Fossil sisters, dream of being in the history books--and not because of their grandfathers.

For any little girl who has dreamed of leaving her family behind and living in a rambling old house full of adults who are not her parents, and enjoy spoiling you just a bit. For any little girl who has dreamed of ditching "regular" school and being taught at home, or going to a different kind of school. For all the little girls, of whatever age, who dream of being dancers, singers, actresses--or car mechanics, this is your read.

Yes, it's implausible. And I found the girls' names just a tad grating. "Pauline, Petrova and (ugh) Posy"--??? I guess it's because I've known parents who had like 5 kids and named them beginning with the same letter that I had such a knee-jerk reaction against them, but really now--Petrova? And I've met a few Poppys---but Posy? How "precious"! The wrap is a tad too convenient; the book was published in 1936; one wonders how safe it was for little Posy to go off to Czechoslovakia and study dance...given the events in about three years after that.

BUT--if you are looking for "realistic" children's literature, don't read any more of the Shoe books. That's not what they're for. My hometown library only had a copy of Circus Shoes, which I read again and again (and would continue to read if I could get a copy). Of course real children don't run off and join the circus, or go to theatre school, or become dancers at the age of eight. Not most of them, anyway. But then, **real** children don't go to wizard school, do they?

A cosy, comforting night-time read for all the little girls who never made the history books.

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