

Village School Children's Book of the Month

Reviewed by Shannon Johnson Village School 3rd-4th teacher

Bob by Wendy Mass and Rebecca Stead

When 10-year-old Livy returns to her grandmother's house in Australia after five years away, she is swept into the past of her last visit. As she tries to reconstruct her last visit, she relies on what others remember to aid her. She also has figure out who or what Bob, (a short greenish creature who has been hiding in her closet because she told him to wait for her while she was gone) is. She needs to gather clues to not only piece together her own past, but also to help Bob figure out who he is, where he came from and help him get back home.

Bob, co-written by Wendy Mass and Rebecca Stead, is written with two narrators (Bob and Livy) in alternating chapters. While the perspective shifts from chapter to chapter, the story flows smoothly, and parts of Bob and Livy's stories are revealed through what each



other remembers. For example, when Livy goes to a candy store with her mom and grandmother and the store owner points her in the direction of the licorice, which she always bought when she was there five years ago, she politely buys the licorice even though she doesn't like it; when she gets home, she discovers that Bob loves licorice. Through her encounters with a few different neighbors, Livy slowly begins to remember her visit and starts to untangle who Bob is and where he possibly came from. A neighbor's son who wanders off and goes

missing for a little bit helps her, unknowingly.

While Livy is piecing together Bob's identity, an undercurrent running through the story is the drought in Australia, which Livy discovers is connected to Bob. The presence of Bob lends an almost mystical quality to the story. The narrative moves quickly, and as Livy and Bob work together to help Bob get home, their friendship is rekindled and they both learn more about themselves.

Bob is suited for children ages 8 to 12, who are ready for books with more than one narrator and a bit of mystery. It is a quick read, filled with little nuggets of wit and wisdom.

You can talk with teachers about their favorite books, and the best recent children's books at the Village School Open House on Saturday Nov. 10 from 10 a.m. to noon. The Village School has an extensive library of great children's books. For more information, go to www.villageschoolma.org.