

Excerpt from *Owl Moon*

By Jane Yolen

It was late one winter night, long past my bedtime, when Papa and I went owling. There was no wind. The trees stood still as giant statues. And the moon was so bright the sky seemed to shine. Somewhere behind us a train whistle blew, long and low, like a sad, sad song.

I could hear it through the woolen cap Pa had pulled down over my ears. A farm dog answered the train, and then a second dog joined in. They sang out, trains and dogs, for a real long time. And when their voices faded away it was as quiet as a dream. We walked on towards the wood, Pa and I.

Our feet crunched over the crisp snow and little gray footprints followed us. Pa made a long shadow, but mine was short and round. I had to run after him every now and then to keep up, and my short, round shadow bumped after me.

We reached the line of pine trees, black and pointy against the sky, and Pa held up his hand. I stopped right where I was and waited. He looked up, as if searching for the stars, as if reading a map up there. The moon made his face into a silver mask. Then he called: "Whoo-whoo-who-who-who-whoooooo," the sound of a great horned owl.

We went into the woods. The shadows were the blackest things I had ever seen. They stained the white snow. My mouth felt furry, for the scarf over it was wet and warm. I didn't ask what kind of things hide behind black trees in the middle of the night. When you go owling you have to be brave.

Then we came to a clearing in the dark woods. The moon was high above us. It seemed to fit exactly over the center of the clearing and the snow below it was whiter than the milk in a cereal bowl.

The owl's call came closer, from high up in the trees on the edge of the meadow. Nothing in the meadow moved. All of a sudden an owl shadow lifted off and flew right over us. We watched silently with heat in our mouths, the heat of all those words we had not spoken. The shadow hooted again.

Then the owl pumped its great wings and lifted off the branch like a shadow without sound. It flew back into the forest. "Time to go home," Pa said to me. I knew then I could talk, I could even laugh out loud. But I was a shadow as we walked home.

When you go owling you don't need words or warm or anything but hope. That's what Pa says. The kind of hope that flies on silent wings under a shining Owl Moon.

Excerpt from *Adopted by an Owl: The True Story of Jackson the Owl*

By Robbyn Smith van Frankenhuyzen; Illustrated by Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen

Days later, as Nick walked the winding paths of his farm, he spotted Jackson following him like a silent shadow from above. It seemed Jackson had decided to stay on.

But as time passed, Jackson's trust for the family grew stronger. One evening there came a *tap-tap-tap* on the glass door. Confused and sleepy-eyed, Nick opened the door. There standing at the entrance was Jackson holding a mouse in his beak. With a little coaxing, he walked into the room and dropped the mouse into Nick's open hand. His long talons made a sharp *click... click... click* sound as he waddled across the wooden floor and back out the door.

In the winter, icy winds blew layers of snow upon his body, but he didn't mind. He would snuggle deeper into his feathers... like a sleeper under a down quilt.

Then, one night just as the family began drifting into their dreams, Nick awoke to a *thump-thump, thump-thump*, like someone walking across the rooftop and heard a familiar hoot. As he stepped out onto the balcony, Jackson swooped low and landed in his favorite tree next to the house.

Excerpt from *There's an Owl in the Shower*

By Jean Craighead George

Borden Watson braked his bike and jumped off. He wheeled it across the narrow logging road and into the dark forest. Leaning it against a tree, he took his rifle from its carrier and put a bullet in the chamber.

A cool green silence wrapped around him. He breathed deeply, then stepped onto the needle-carpeted ground and walked a soundless distance. Ankle deep in ferns and wildflowers, he stopped in a grove of trees. The trees were so enormous that one alone, standing in the middle of a logging road, could block trucks in two directions.

Borden was in the old-growth forest of the Pacific Coast in northern California, a land blessed with abundant rain and sun, a temperate climate, and deep soils. He did not see this wild wealth. He was in the old-growth forest for one purpose: to 'shoot owls--spotted owls. He hated them.

His eyes cruised up the trunk of an enormous Douglas fir. They peered past the large low branches, up past a floral burst of limbs where a pine siskin cheeped, and on up to a cluster of needles two hundred feet above the forest floor. Just below the needle spray was a large nest of sticks. He grinned.

"You," he said aloud. "You owl, in that nest. You're dead, the minute you stick your head up." It was almost twilight, and the owl, Borden reasoned, should be awake and ready to go out hunting. He thought about his father and cried out, "My dad doesn't have a job because of you. He can't cut any more big trees because of you."

Shouting seemed to help the pain Borden had felt since his father had lost his job with the lumber company. His father had told him that a judge had stopped all sale of the trees on public lands in the Northwest until the United States Forest Service could come up with a plan to save the spotted owl. It lived in the old-growth forests, and the forests were being cut down for lumber. The gentle owl was on the brink of extinction.

The government, it seemed to Borden, liked owls better than people.

Poetry Selections

Hawk Roosting

by Ted Hughes

I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.
Inaction, no falsifying dream
Between my hooked head and hooked feet:
Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

The convenience of the high trees!
The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray
Are of advantage to me;
And the earth's face upward for my inspection.

My feet are locked upon the rough bark.
It took the whole of Creation
To produce my foot, my each feather:
Now I hold Creation in my foot

Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly -
I kill where I please because it is all mine.
There is no sophistry in my body:
My manners are tearing off heads -

The allotment of death.
For the one path of my flight is direct
Through the bones of the living.
No arguments assert my right:

The sun is behind me.
Nothing has changed since I began.
My eye has permitted no change.
I am going to keep things like this.



Hope is the Thing With Feathers

by Emily Dickinson

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,
And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.
I've heard it in the chilliest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

The Eagle

By Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1851)

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.