

# Winnie the Pooh a common thread between generations

He was conceived in Canada in 1914, born in England some 12 years later, and reincarnated in the United States in 1961. He lives on today, and like any other legend with ties to this country, now finds himself featured in a set of Canadian postal stamps.

Throughout the decades, there has been no other children's storybook character that has endured, while endearing itself to the hearts of both kids and adults, like Winnie The Pooh.

The lovable stuffed bear of very little brain, along with Christopher Robin and all the other delightful animal friends who roam the 100 Acre Wood, has continued to offer much needed refuge from the real world for generations of little ones and their parents.

Starting out with the two books by A.A. Milne and his illustrator E.H. Shepard, through the Disney movie combining a trio of Winnie the Pooh shorts in

1977, Winnie et. al. have always managed to adapt themselves to the popular kids' medium of the day.

The Winnie stories have sustained while other children's offerings from an earlier age

have fallen victim to the politically correct police.

There's neither bad guys nor gratuitous violence, just an array of characters incorporating the width and breadth of the human personality. There's the uptight Rabbit, the would-be wise Owl, the eternally pessimistic Eeyore, the bouncy, self-absorbed Tigger



From where I live

Bruce Stapley

(spelled, of course, T-I-Double guh-er), and so on. And of course, Winnie himself, the rotund, honey-obsessed bear with the penchant for phrasing things in such a literal, lovable and half-witted way as to cause kids to smile happily, while parents forced to read or watch the stories again and again never tire of Milne's linguistic brilliance.

Pooh even inspired one of the first books on the fast growing concept of downshifting, with a publication called The Tao of Pooh advancing the laid back philosophy espoused by the care free bear.

For a kid at heart like myself, having a second batch of offspring has offered me the chance to head back into the 100 Acre Wood.

Unlike banal Barney and his contrived, syrupy, 1990's properness, Winnie the Pooh offers the classic timelessness of a Shakespearean play. It makes you laugh, while triggering memories of the innocence of childhood.

And I know I'm not alone in saying I can't watch Christopher Robin giving his final heartwarming farewell to Winnie without experiencing the welling up of tears that goes with the loss of something so pure and joyful as a warm childhood fantasy.

For no one has taken the journey through the 100 Acre Wood ever really leaves it. My 18-year-old daughter Marissa, who recently gave my four-year-old son Drew the classic Disney video containing the three Winnie featurettes as a birthday gift, wears her Winnie and Tigger boxer shorts regularly so as to maintain a tie with her childhood friends.

As for me, when I walked into the post office down the road recently and saw the assortment of paraphernalia promoting the new Winnie The Pooh stamp set, I gleefully purchased the stamp booklet before hurrying home to add a few of the Winnie items to my Christmas list.

Harry Coleburn, the ex-Englishman from Winnipeg whose pet black bear cub named Winnie eventually led to Milne's penning the Winnie The Pooh series, would surely be delighted that the legacy of his playful little friend lives on.

After all, childhoods come and go. But it's nice to know that Winnie and the gang will always be out there in the 100 Acre Wood providing a temporary retreat for kids big and small when the world gets a little too serious.

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