



The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation (Ashgate Studies in Childhood, 1700 to the Present)

David Whitley

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Given that Disney's animated films are an important part of many children's viewing experience worldwide, the messages movies such as Bambi, The Jungle Book, Pocahontas, and Beauty and the Beast convey about the natural world are of crucial importance, and never more so than today. David Whitley's compelling study examines a range of Disney's feature animations, from Snow White to Finding Nemo, in which images of wild nature are a central aspect of the narrative. Whitley challenges the notion that the sentimentality of the Disney aesthetic prevents audiences from developing a critical awareness of contested environmental issues. Rather, he argues, even as the films communicate the central ideologies of the times in which they were produced, they also express the ambiguities and tensions that underlie these dominant values. Differentiating among the effects produced by particular films, therefore, produces a more complex understanding of the classic Disney canon. Whitley's exploration of the way images of nature are mediated in Disney animation produces greater understanding of the role popular art may play in shaping feelings and ideas that are central to contemporary experience.

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