

ABOUT

the Author

MARK BARRATT has received critical praise for his novel *Joe Rat*, the precursor to *The Wild Man*. He has also acted, directed, and taught, and his script for the audio play *The Wizard's Spell* won a prize for Best Entertainment at the New York Festival in 1994. Mark lives in London with his wife and children.



PRaise FOR

The Wild Man

“Barratt writes like he is keeping an adjacent berth to Dickens; here’s hoping scrappy Joe has a few more tricks up his ratty sleeves.”

— *Booklist*

“The story has plenty of thrills and chills and a climax that brings all the players to a nighttime confrontation on the dangerous, plague-ridden wharfs of London.”

— *Horn Book Magazine*

“Readers will be pleased that the door is left open for a third tale of the enterprising, tough street kid with a genuine heart of gold.”

— *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

PRaise FOR

Joe Rat

“A chilling mystery that will haunt readers long after the final page.”

— *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“A pugnacious orphan scavenging the London underworld to pay off his nefarious benefactor — it sounds like the missing YA novel of Charles Dickens or Wilkie Collins because, basically, it is.”

— *Booklist*

“Here’s a novel that takes its Dickensian roots seriously.”

— *Horn Book Magazine*

THE WILD MAN

Written by Mark Barratt

Paperback ISBN: 978-0-8028-5377-6 ❖ \$9.00

5" x 7" ❖ 351 pages ❖ Ages 11 & up

TO ORDER

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The Wild Man
with young readers,
we would be happy to hear from you.

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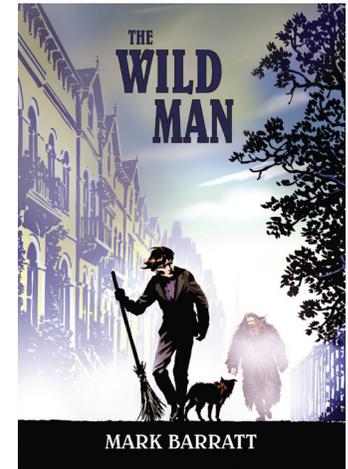


EERDMANS BOOKS
for Young Readers
Grand Rapids/Cambridge

An imprint of Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

THE WILD MAN

Written by
Mark Barratt



At one end of the stretcher, almost hidden among the blackest of the animal hides, a pair of eyes glinted open. At first Joe couldn't make out anything else. Then he realized the shadows around the eyes were made not of animal hide but human hair.... Only the eyes were visible — dark, shining, blank. With a shiver of surprise, Joe realized he was looking at a man.

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

- ❖ 19th-century London
- ❖ Orphans and neglected children
- ❖ Socioeconomic differences
- ❖ Family relationships
- ❖ Trust and loyalty

*Eerdmans Books for Young Readers
Discussion Guide*

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE READING THE BOOK

1. Have you ever been envious of someone else's life? Do you think anyone could be envious of your own life?

2. Have you ever been torn between doing what you know is right and remaining loyal to someone you care about? What choices did you make — and why?

3. Using library or online resources, read about orphans and homeless children living in 19th-century London. Why were so many young people living on the streets without families or homes?



QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON AFTER READING THE BOOK

1. In chapter 4, when Joe spies on the Harvey family and catches sight of Alec for the first time, he feels as if “his own reflection had suddenly appeared behind the glass.” How is Alec like Joe? How is he different?

2. Describe the relationship between Alec and his father. How is it different from the relationship between Joe and Mr. Harvey? Does Alec have reason to be jealous?

3. Why do you think Bates covers for Alec after he has been in the gin shop? Do you agree with his decision to do this?

4. As Alec watches Joe from the “Reformatory,” he thinks about how much easier it would be to open cab doors than endure hours of lessons and confinement. Meanwhile, Joe wonders with envy what sleeping on a soft bed and using silver spoons must be like. What is each boy unaware of in wishing for the other boy's life?

5. In chapter 15, Barlow, the gardener, tells Joe, “Gentry go their way and workin' folk follow.” Do you find this to be generally true in the novel? Is this true for Joe? Is it true for the wealthy and the poor today?

6. When Alec asks James Mundy if he is a “wild man” in chapter 17, Mundy responds, “There's a little wild in every creature, boy. Man, woman, and child. Even that dog there. Some got it more'n others. That's all.” Do you agree with his statement? Explain why or why not. How might this statement apply to each of the characters in the book?

7. Why does Barlow think Joe ought not to forget about being out on the street with no place to stay and no “chink” in his pocket? Is this good advice for Joe?

8. Why, if Bates is a servant himself, does he seem to hate Joe?

9. What do we learn about Mr. Harvey when he describes his own father to Joe? How does this shed light on his relationship with his son Alec? How are both father-son

relationships in the novel — Mr. Harvey's and Alec's, James Mundy's and Joe's — complicated by ideals and expectations?



ACTIVITIES

1. What would the life of someone in Joe's or Alec's circumstances look like in the 21st century? Choose a scene from the novel to rewrite in a contemporary context.

2. Choose a secondary character from the book whom you would like to know more about. Write a scene that gives some background on this person, and draw an illustration to go with it. Or rewrite a scene from the book from that character's point of view.

3. Hold a mock trial in your classroom or reading group examining Joe's culpability in Felicity's kidnapping. Have someone play the roles of Joe's defense lawyer, the prosecutor, a judge, and a jury, and come to a decision regarding his guilt or innocence, and an appropriate sentence if the verdict is guilty.

4. Read about laudanum use and its causes and effects in 19th-century England. Consider what would be a modern-day equivalent to laudanum and make a chart comparing the use and abuse of both drugs, including where they come from, how they are made available, and what law enforcement efforts are doing to eradicate the abuse of them.