

2021

## Review: Listening for Lions

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### Recommended Citation

Schwedt, Rachel and DeLong, Janice A., "Review: Listening for Lions" (2021). *Ages 10-12*. 12.  
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## *Listening for Lions*

By Gloria Whelan

Harper Trophy, 2006

### DESCRIPTION:

Born to medical missionary parents, Rachel Sheridan loves the people, the animals, and the land of Kenya. When the influenza epidemic of 1918 hits their area, Rachel's parents work hard to treat the natives in the hospital they have established, but they, too, finally succumb to the disease. Heartbroken by the death of her parents, Rachel is afraid that she will be sent back to England by the Missionary Board to live in a bleak orphanage like the one where her parents were raised. The question of what will happen to her is answered, however, by the Pritchards, an avaricious neighboring British couple. Taking advantage of the similarity in physical features of Rachel and their daughter Valerie who died in the epidemic, they blackmail Rachel into pretending to be their daughter and send her off to England to visit Valerie's ailing grandfather. Having been previously exiled from England by his father because of bad behavior Mr. Pritchard hopes to regain access to his father's fortune through his daughter. Dressed in Valerie's clothes, Rachel carries out her role until she can no longer live with the lie and confesses all. By then the two have formed a strong affectionate bond and Grandfather Pritchard adopts her in spite of her part in the deception. Seeing to her education when he is alive, he leaves enough inheritance to her that she is able to complete medical school and return to her beloved Africa to reestablish her parent's hospital.

### CRITIQUE:

Whelan's description of the landscape and wildlife of Kenya and England play a large part in this story. In Africa, Rachel loves to hear the nighttime roaring of the lions and in England she adopts Grandfather Pritchard's love of birds, recording their appearance and behavior for him when he is unable to leave his room. Rachel is a kind and thoughtful heroine who demonstrates real courage when she confesses to the deceit of which she has been a part. In addition, her determination to be a doctor in an era when women were not considered fit candidates for the job shows her dedication to serve the people of Africa. Whelan's titles featuring courageous young women are set in many different countries including India, Russia, and China. Readers who enjoy this book may want to read the author's *The Homeless Bird* which was a winner of the National Book Award.

### RELATED SUBJECTS:

Adoption, Africa, Birds, Death of parent, Doctors, England, Family love, Homesickness, Influenza, Kenya, Kikuyu, Lions, Lying, Masai, Missionaries, Nature, Orphans, Self-respect

### CHARACTER THEMES:

Ambition, Appreciation of Nature, Boldness, Caring, Compassion, Community, Coping, Courage, Determination, Devotion, Dignity, Discipline, Diversity, Endurance, Faith, Family love, Giving, Green Honesty, Hope, Initiative, Inspiration, Love, Perseverance, Pride, Resolve, Respect, Responsibility, Sacrifice, Spunk, Strength, Survival (Physical), Trustworthiness, Unselfishness, Wisdom, Work ethic

### AWARDS:

Alaska Battle for the Books, Beehive Book award (UT), Best Children's Book of the Year (Bank Street), Charlie May Simon Children's Book Award, Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award (VT), Golden Sower Award (NE), Great Lakes Great Books Award (MI), Lamplighter Award, Maine Student Book Award, Massachusetts Children's Book Award, NYPL: 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing, Rebecca Caudill Young Readers Book Award (IL), Rhode Island Teen Book Award, Sequoyah Book Award (OK), Sunshine State Young Reader's Award (FL), Volunteer State Book Award (TN), Young Reader's Choice Award (Pacific Northwest Library Association)