



Barfield School

Barry A. Whittingham

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"Would this loathsome inner creature which had poisoned his past and was now infecting the present leave its slimy traces on his future?"

The first novel in the CALL OF FRANCE trilogy, Barfield School explores the thoughts, feelings and motivations of Michael Morgan. Disappointing academic results, a disastrous first love and a failed first job experience in industry have all gone to make Michael feel he hasn't yet found his way in life. He decides to train to be a French teacher. But at his parents' home the atmosphere is poisoned, school life becomes increasingly tedious and his unfortunate handling of relations with two female colleagues leads to disturbing repercussions. And then tragedy strikes. He longs to wipe the slate of his past clean by realizing his dream of starting a new life in France. But he's also tempted to stay in England and pursue an exciting business venture with a friend. Which should he choose? Wouldn't both allow him to escape from the tensions of home and school to a more exciting and fulfilling life? Or is he simply running away from himself?

Barfield School is a dramatized portrayal of some of the things which led the author to become a longstanding expat in a country he's always felt an irresistible attraction for.

Barfield School Details

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From Reader Review Barfield School for online ebook

Hazel Manuel says

This is a delightful book which follows the fortunes of a young Englishman determined to find a way to fulfil his dream and live in France. We travel with 'Michael' as he transitions to adulthood with all the challenges and decisions inherent in coming of age. The central character, like all young people of that age, has a lot to learn about work, friendship, women and relationships, and he ponders life's lessons with a deep and thorough delicacy. The book is written in a classically French style, which is unusual today and evokes the likes of Flaubert and Balzac. The story too, is evocative of the French classical heroes with their determined protagonists making their way through the complexities of society, work and women. So it is with Barfield School. This is at its root, an uplifting read which is well-written and thought-provoking. recommended.

Anthony Stancomb says

A charming account of a young man's early life which, judging by the disclaimers at the beginning of the book, appears to be a thinly disguised biography.

We see him in his student days when he first encounters the French language and literature and then in his first temporary job with a brewery (where I learned some interesting things about how they used to operate their franchises). Once qualified, he gets a job teaching French at a school, and we follow his ups and downs during his time there.

Accustomed as one is to reading either about people on a trajectory towards important lives or about those who are sinking under the weight of poverty, squalor and abuse, this is a refreshing change. We see a young man emerging from a normal, stable, pedestrian background peopled by normal grandparents, aunts and uncles, to teach in a normal school where he adjusts to fit in with classroom discipline, common-room colleagues and difficult Deputy Heads. We also follow his weekend T-shirt making ventures, first fumbling with girls, and the ensuing relationships that peter out.

It's the sort of thing that is the fabric of every young man's life, and as such is an interesting account. This is all our lives – and it's admirable that the writer doesn't try and dress it up as being something else. It's a very good portrayal of the kind of life so many of us have lived. He even talks of the hero as a 'plodder' with an 'absence of any real brilliance' in a rather charmingly self-deprecating way. Refreshingly candid.

By the end of the book, we see our hero about to embark on a teaching exchange in France – and no doubt on to greener fields. Roll on the next in the series.

Kate says

I won this novel from a Goodreads giveaway. This novel accounts a young Englishman's journey to fulfill his dreams of living in France. It consists of themes of travel, work, love, relationships, and self-discovery. It was a refreshing read and "feel-good" read, and I definitely recommend it to young adults and adults.

Wendy Jensen says

It took a lot for me to finish this book but I did. Basically the ramblings of a 28 year old teacher (puts a bad image of teachers), living at home, waits for his mother to deliver breakfast in bed on the weekend..... Has aspirations of going to France on a teaching exchange.

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads.
