



# Ghost Wings

By Barbara Josse

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Set in Mexico amidst the monarch butterflies' annual migration and during the Days of the Dead, *Ghost Wings*, written by Barbara M. Josse, author of the best-selling *Mama, Do You Love Me?*, and illustrated with the luminescent artwork of Giselle Potter, is the touching story of a little girl whose very best friend is her grandmother. But one spring, Grandmother becomes thin as smoke. When she dies, Papa says, "When you love someone they never really leave." But to the little girl, Grandmother seems impossibly far away. Who will sing to her? Who will chase the monsters from under her bed? Then, during the Days of the Dead, something extraordinary happens that brings Papa's words vividly to life. Ideal for one-on-one sharing as well as a group discussion, *Ghost Wings'* poignant message of the endurance of love and the power of memory is sure to linger long after the book is closed. A discussion guide is included.

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## Ghost Wings By Barbara Joose Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Shortly before her death, a little Mexican's girl's grandmother (who is also her best friend) takes her to the Magic Circle of oyamel fir trees to say goodbye to the monarch butterflies as they prepare for their migration north. Even after a butterfly that has landed on the girl's arm flies away, her arm still tickles. "That's because they carry the souls of the old ones, and the old ones never really leave," Grandmother says. After Grandmother dies, all the sad little girl can think about is that her arm doesn't feel the tickle anymore, and her grandmother's scent of cornmeal and roses is fading as well. It's not until the season for the Days of the Dead, the time to remember the old ones, that the girl discovers the truth of her beloved grandmother's words.

Giselle Potter, illustrator of *Kate and the Beanstalk* and other intriguing picture books, applies her unique, naive artistic style in muted earth tones to Barbara M. Josse's narrative: the oval-faced grandmother and granddaughter work tortilla dough together, hold hands under the butterfly-covered trees, and keep the imaginary nighttime monsters at bay. Josse's poetic tale celebrates the magic of remembrance in a way that will speak to every child who has loved--and lost--someone special. Details about the legendary 2,000-mile migration of monarch butterflies and about the Mexican Days of the Dead add an exotic twist to this delicate, touching story. Josse is the author of many wonderful books for children, including the award-winning *Mama, Do You Love Me?*. (Ages 5 to 8) --*Emilie Coulter*

#### From Publishers Weekly

Potter's sublimely quirky illustrations adorn this moving tale of death and remembrance set in Mexico and linked to the rhythms of the monarch butterfly. "Grandmother was my best friend," confides the narrator, who treasures their visits to the "Magic Circle" where, every winter, the migrating butterflies "filled the trees with gold." One spring, however, Grandmother becomes "thin as smoke" and soon dies. The disappearance of the monarchs becomes a metaphor for the girl's grief. Later, during the Days of the Dead, the annual celebration honoring those who have died, the girl and her family visit her grandmother's grave. There, a butterfly alights on the girl's arm, melting her sadness: "In my head, I heard Grandmother's songs . I remember how she smelled, like cornmeal and roses." Josse's (*Mama, Do You Love Me?*) poetic descriptions ("when they flew away their wings rustled like skirts") and intriguing details of Mexican culture, from tortillas made on a metate to calaveras (traditional skull-shaped chocolate and sugar candies skulls) eaten during the Days of the Dead, inform her sensitively drawn story. (Unfortunately, a key word is spelled wrong the family creates an "alter" to honor Grandmother.) Potter's singular watercolors, rendered in subtle earth tones and accented with pungent shades of red and orange, capture the arid landscape, and her signature characters, with their slightly elongated Modigliani-esque faces, are as graceful as the flight of a butterfly. Ages 3-8.

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#### From School Library Journal

K-Gr 3-The Magic Circle is a place in the Mexican forest where the monarch butterflies gather. A little girl and her grandmother let the creatures light on their arms and faces and feel the whisper of their legs and wings. When Grandmother becomes ill, they make a last trip to the Magic Circle, where she reminds the child to remember the feel of the butterflies "because they carry the souls of the old ones, and the old ones

never really leave." The youngster struggles to cope with the passing of her grandmother and, as the Days of the Dead approach, she and her family make their ofrenda, their altar of offerings. The traditional activities of the holiday don't bring about a remembrance of her grandmother until she spies a golden fluttering-the monarchs have come to the cemetery-and her memories of her best friend return with the magic of past moments. Joosse has created a charming and heartwarming story of love and acceptance incorporating elements of Mexican family and cultural traditions. Potter's characteristic illustrations in ink, watercolor, and colored pencil lend a magical quality to the enchanting story. A study guide is included in the back as are descriptions of the celebration and the migration of the monarch butterflies. A wonderful read-aloud during Days of the Dead or as a tribute to grandparents.-Patti Gonzales, Los Angeles Public Library

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Patricia Joyner:**

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children till adult are different content. As it is known to us that book is very important for people. The book Ghost Wings has been making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is rather advantages for you. The reserve Ghost Wings is not only giving you far more new information but also to become your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your own personal spend time to read your guide. Try to make relationship while using book Ghost Wings. You never feel lose out for everything in case you read some books.

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