

A Norwegian Mountain Family

A Norwegian Mountain Family was produced by TMM Produksjon AS for Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation. A children series about a 7-year-old girl named Oda and her life on a mountain farm in Norway. Picturesquely situated in Todalen, on the threshold of Trollheimen, ‘Home of the Trolls’, in central Norway, the wild and scenic landscape has always played a major role in the lives of the farm people. And so it does today, though now the farm lacks nothing in terms of modern comforts, conveniences, and machinery. Three generations of the Kårvatn family currently live on the farm; the grandparents, the parents, and their children, Oda, Erik and Nora. The series centers upon the eldest of the three children, Oda (7). The series follows Oda, season by season, for a full year. Oda enjoys a good and exciting life on the farm, set as it is amid such magnificent scenery, but to live in such isolation undeniably has its drawbacks.

This particular episode is about the Christmas celebration on the farm. It is Christmas on the farm and time to fell the ritual tree. Oda accompanies her grandfather into the wood to find a suitable tree. Oda insists that they also need one for the livestock, though her grandfather is not so sure. She, however, thinks it only right and proper that the farm animals, too, should have something extra for Christmas. She reads a bedtime story for her brother about the resident gnome, who likewise cares about the animals’ well-being. The children make Christmas decorations for the animals and on the morning of Christmas Eve sneak out with goodies for them and the gnome.

A Norwegian Mountain Family was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2010 finalists in the “up to 6 fiction” category.



Figure 1: The Kårvatn family live in the mountain area in Norway.



Figure 2: Oda is reading a story about gnomes to her ill brother, Erik.

International experts’ opinions

Almost all the international experts loved the program for various reasons, especially for the scenic beauty shown in it. “When they are going through the woods and the sun is coming down: oh, this is so beautiful – or just the snow – all that snow” (female expert, Denmark). They loved the scenes depicting snow in the program. “The snow – all that stuff makes sense to everybody who lives in the hemisphere where it is snowy and Christmas. But for me, it was almost like a fairytale: it is snow!” (female expert, Australia). “Coming from a country that has a lot of snow, I love the look of it all. I love – like a lot of times we get when we are shooting in the snow, particularly shooting in the urban snow, we get slush, grey and white; so to see this and to see the girl so comfortable in this environment was unusual. I just loved all that” (male expert, Canada). They enjoyed the experience of witnessing a family experiencing the Christmas in the snow. “I just like being in the mountains with that family. I really found myself enjoying” (male



Figure 3: Oda and her grandpa go out to get a Christmas tree.



Figure 4: Oda decides to get a tree for Brownie, a resident gnome.



Figure 5: Oda and grandpa leave a gift for the water spirit.

expert, USA).

Besides the breath-taking scenic beauty of Norway, there were other aspects of the program that were also discussed. Some experts like the slow pace of the program and admire the “program that doesn’t rush through” (male expert, USA).

They also appreciated the different Christmas story that the program offered. “I really loved this, because it wasn’t a story of Santa. We get a lot of stories of Father Christmas in Australia. I just really loved – I loved – well, for me, it was about a farm, so I really loved it” (female expert, Australia). They also loved the relationship shown between the various family members. “I liked the relationship between Riga and her granddad. I thought that was a lovely thing to see. It just felt right for Christmas as well. I know what you were saying about it being a bit slow, but I quite like that as well. It gave you enough space to actually enjoy the landscape and enjoy the relationship, and enjoy her exploration of this magical world. I thought it was well done” (female expert, country unknown).



Figure 6: Oda gives a squirrel some nuts as Christmas gifts.



Figure 7: Oda decorates the Christmas tree for Brownie.



Figure 8: Oda treats all farm animals to celebrate Christmas.

Screenshots from *A Norwegian Mountain Family* © TMM Produksjon AS

Some found the program heavy in tone. “We have seen a lot of great stuff like this from Norway before. They can have a very light touch, and this one is just missing somehow – that little light touch, which would make it even more amazing” (male expert, Germany). “The opening shot of this film, the dialogue, where there was this little girl who was so excited it was Christmas Eve, and then the shot was her looking out the window depressed. That is exactly what it is like in Norway. It has that heaviness; the film had that heaviness” (male expert, USA).

*Prof. Dr. Dafna Lemish, Namrata Bansal and Hao Cao
(Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, USA)*