



Skating Shoes

Noel Streatfeild

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The beloved Noel Streatfeild classic back in print!

It's a stroke of great luck when Harriet Johnson's doctor prescribes skating after an illness that has left her feeling frail and listless. For on her very first day at the rink, Harriet meets orphaned Lalla Moore, who is being brought up by her wealthy aunt Claudia to be a skating champion. Although they have little in common, the girls form a fast friendship. Harriet is energized by talented, funny Lalla, and Lalla in turn blossoms under the affection of openhearted Harriet. The girls skate together more and more. But just as Lalla's interest in skating starts to fade, Harriet's natural talent begins to emerge. Suddenly Lalla and Harriet seem headed in two very different directions. Can their friendship survive?

Skating Shoes Details

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Author : Noel Streatfeild

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From Reader Review Skating Shoes for online ebook

Kellynn says

I read this growing up and have revisited it over the years. This time, coming back to it, I find myself deeply empathetic for poor vivid madamish overwhelmed Lalla, caught in an adult world frozen in memorial to her father, and in love with Harriet's comfortable bustling teasing tumbling family, with her entrepreneurial and industrious brothers, and her splendid, loving mother. I love how all the characters--Max Lindblom, Sam, Miss Goldthorpe, Nana--who make up the adult cast of the book are all so distinctive and sympathetic and themselves interesting, and I love how much they loved and were interested in the children under their care. But I couldn't help also feeling the rather unfinished quality of the book, where the ending is abrupt and unsatisfactory and the pacing is odd. I wanted to see Harriet take her inter-silver and I wanted to see where the brothers' garden plot (literally) went, and I wanted to see Lalla blossom as a performer.

Orinoco Womble (tidy bag and all) says

I didn't care much for this book. I was interested to read it but found few of the events and characters engaging. There were too many situations and even phrases drawn from earlier books and too little actual explanation of what "brackets" or "edge work" was, for people like me who have never ice-skated (or rollerskated, come to that.) In the afterword, the author's son talks of the hours of painstaking research done at rinks--and yet none of that shows up in the text. It took me awhile to figure out that a "one foot three" is a figure 3 done with only one foot. I mean, all the author had to do was say that Lalla didn't want to do her brackets "which involved doing this" in one sentence. Did she assume that all her readers knew as much as she discovered?

Streatfeild continues her tradition of girls with odd names (Lalla? What is that?, "Santa" from Circus Shoes, "Posy and Petrova ", etc). The parents are present in this book but the fathers act like children--George (why couldn't she call Harriet's parents Mother and Father so as not to get him confused with the other boys?) can't do sums, earn enough to feed his family, or stand up to his selfish brother, and no one, particularly not her own husband, seems to be able to tell Aunt Claudia where to get off--though they all seem to be very good at manipulating her, which is odd considering what a control-freak she is. Lalla isn't a nice kid, and she doesn't improve on acquaintance. The governess, like David, is more interested in her cosily-feathered little nest than anything else.

I found it extremely hard to believe that Aunt Claudia would pay for eeeverything for Harriet, or that the rink owner and skating teacher would allow H. to continue to use their services free if Claudia decided to cut off the source of the freebies. But it's all wish-fulfillment fiction for little girls, rather like Ballet Shoes. Who wouldn't love to be let off going to school for over a year due to an unspecified illness, and find herself with free skating classes, free dancing classes, free fencing classes, and even all-expenses-paid vacations? *And if she's well enough to dance AND fence AND skate, how is she not well enough to attend school?* At least there is a good message about talent not being enough unless you put in the work to make it happen. I knew a lot of little girls who took dancing classes, baton twirling etc and could have been contenders--but way before secondary school they were off to the next thing. Me, I've never had much in the way of talent, so I guess I have fewer regrets about the should-have-beens.

nancy says

Top Nine Reasons I Love Skating Shoes & Am Grateful I Read It Again:

- 1) It was one of my favorite books as a child and it still holds up.
- 2) It has lines like this: “During the last six months the little girl Harriet, without her noticing it, had disappeared and a new Harriet had taken her place. A Harriet who looked much the same outside, but was more of a person inside.”
- 3) I had totally forgotten that the book took place in England. (Not sure if this is a testament to my terrible memory, or the fact that the book transcended time and place so well and got all of the emotional details just right. Whatever the case, this little Staten Island girl didn’t realize how far it was from her reality.)
- 4) The author spends real time developing the adult characters, but not at the expense of the child characters.
- 5) The author gives you just enough technical skating details to understand what Lalla is doing...and nothing more.
- 6) Harriet’s family is supportive and real and wonderful to spend time with. (I’m guessing that the author of The Penderwicks must have read these books as a child? Both families have that same cozy charm!)
- 7) Lalla is rude and awful to Harriet at times, and to the other characters in the book, and yet the author presents Lalla in such a way that you don’t completely loathe her.
- 8) Harriet doesn’t have some big turnaround where she stands up to Lalla. She responds exactly as young girl in her situation would.
- 9) The book is an absolute classic, but it’s still not "perfect". (There were parts where the pace would strangely speed up, the ending is a bit abrupt, and sometimes a scene would end and there’d no break between paragraphs before the author would begin another scene.)

Rachel Brand says

What a lovely story! First published in 1951, this is a story for young girls about a spoilt only child who is destined to become the next skating star who receives her comeuppance when she makes friends with a poor, ill child who is prescribed to take up skating to improve the strength in her legs. White Boots explores the friendship between the two girls, their winnings and failures as amateur skaters and the lifestyles of the two very different families. Streatfeild can write very humorously sometimes, considering this book was written in the 50s. In general, just a lovely children's book. 9/10

Jamie says

Still working my way through the "shoe books" when I can find them (which can be tough).

Another lovely story that any little girl would love to read and reread.

Gosh I wish I had read these as a child... because "when you read a book as a child, it becomes a part of your identity in a way that no other reading in your whole life does. And I've gotten carried away, haven't I?"

Sorry couldn't help the You've Got Mail reference. :)

Susann says

Why *did* Uncle David stay with Aunt Claudia? Surely he could have done better.

Update: One of my favorites of the 'Shoes' books. With this re-read, I was amazed by the number of adults that conspired to help both Lalla and Harriet. This is also one of the few Streatfeild books that focuses more on friendship than on family relationships. It certainly contains one of my favorite Streatfeild Nanas: "She did not hold with ice, nasty, damp stuff, but she defied any ice to give a chill to a child who wore wool knitted by herself next to the skin."

As a child, I was completely focused on the figure skating and on the Lalla & Harriet relationship, especially when Lalla loses control towards the end. Thus, now, it's so much fun to dwell on the details that went over my 8-year-old head: the passing references to the recently-ended WWII, the ins and outs of the Covent Garden market, the gradual slipping away of Johnson family wealth and, yes, the wonderment about Aunt Claudia's marriage to Uncle David.

CLM says

The story of spider-like Harriet, recovering from illness, learning how to skate and becoming friends with Lalla Moore, who is destined to be a figure skating star, is one of my favorites. I probably read it for the first time in third grade and at least a dozen times since, including an unplanned reread today.

This is a great read on Boxing Day! Here is a link to my review:

<http://perfectretort.blogspot.com/201...>

Karyn says

Cute story but Ballet Shoes will always be my favorite. This one seemed to have a good start, but drag at the end with little story development. Some might avoid it all together but don't. Though it may not be fantastic Streatfeild is a wonderful story teller and you don't see the like anymore.

Kerry says

I've been wanting to reread this for a while and the ice skating at the Olympics pushed me over the edge. I finished it a while ago, but I'm late catching up on reviews at the moment.

It did send me down a rabbit hole of exactly how figure skating as represented in the book compared to what we call figure skating today. The latter grew out of the former, but as in so many sports, skating is aimed at the spectators these days and the time and precision required for actual figure skating was decided to take too long. Nowadays, all the skating we see on TV is what was considered free skating in this book. I can totally see why Harriet turned out to be the one with the skills and temperament to be a figure skater, while Lalla would shine in free skating.

This was a lovely trip down memory lane. I do still like this book very much.

Jennifer says

Streatfeild has the most charming, insightful, compassionate way of describing human interactions. This is my least favorite of her Shoes books so far, mostly because skating offers fewer opportunities than theater to describe the terrifying/magical feelings of auditions and performances (my favorite aspect of the other books). But "least favorite" of the Shoes books doesn't say much - they're all beautiful.

Louise Culmer says

Harriet Johnson is recovering from a serious illness and is still very weak. Her doctor recommends that she take up ice skating to strengthen her legs. The Johnsons are very hard up, but the doctor knows the manager of the local ice rink and says he will let Harriet skate for free, she will only have to pay for the hire of the skates and boots. Even that is too much for the Johnsons to manage, so Harriet's oldest brother Alec does a paper round to pay for the hire of the boots and skates. At the first day at the rink, Harriet is dismayed to find the hired boots are ugly brown boots with a green stripe painted on them, not the beautiful white boots she sees others wearing. But she has a bit of luck, she meets pretty, high spirited Lalla Moore, the daughter of a famous figure skater. Since his death, Lalla's ambitious Aunt Claudia has brought Lalla up to be a figure skater, dreaming of when her niece will be a champion like her father, and she, Aunt Claudia, will bask in her reflected glory. Lalla helps Harriet with her skating, and the two girls become friends. Meanwhile Alec is saving the leftover money from his paper round to buy fruit and vegetables for his father's provision store. The father, George Johnson, sells things that his brother William sends from the country, the trouble is William is greedy and keeps all the best things to eat himself. Alec hopes to improve the stock. George Johnson is pretty hopeless. Devoted to his brother, he won't hear a word against him, despite the fact that the shop is stocked only with things William doesn't want. You wonder how the charming Olivia Johnson came to be married to such a hopelessly ineffectual type. However, George aside, the Johnson family are delightful, and it is easy to see why Lalla is happy to know them. Lalla even begins to wonder if there might be more to life than skating after all. My favourite character in the book is Lalla's governess, Miss Goldthorpe, who doesn't care much for skating: "She thought skating rinks nasty, cold, damp places, and she could not imagine why anyone, unless forced like Lalla to do so, wanted to spend their time going round and

round on ice, when they could spend it reading interesting books.". A delightful story, you don't have to love skating to love this book.

Jessica says

One of my favorite books as a kid! The story of two girls who become friends as they train together in figure skating, the one because she is the daughter of a famous skater, the other as a way to recuperate from a long illness. I loved everything about this book, the descriptions of the moves they were learning, their clothes, the dialogue . . . and what little girl hasn't dreamed of being an ice skater?! An utterly charming book!

Isabel says

Read this when I was younger hundreds of times, so it has to be one of my favourites :)

Beth says

This is probably one of the best Streatfields. It was also one of my favorites growing up. It's probably because I had a better idea of what figure skating looked like than ballet, rather than the book actually being better, because *Skating Shoes* has a lot of familiar elements. Though they are very well done here; the Johnson family dynamic is great, and Harriet becoming a possibility through sheer coincidence and hard work is fun to read about.

It's interesting that Streatfield casually has wealthy people sponsor poorer children's education so they can give whatever talent they may have - here, it's skating; for Margaret in *Far to Go* (I went on a Noel Streatfield binge today) it's acting - the time needed to develop it.

iamtedae says

This is by the author of the memorable "Shoes" books, an old favorite. It is, oddly enough, one of the two books not in the "Shoes" line named after footwear. Trivia, for those of you interested in such. Like the "Shoes" books, it focuses on a young, underprivileged heroine fortuitously encountering a greatly privileged counterpart and forging a friendship that benefits and develops both lives, surviving jealousy, etc.

However, this particular story isn't up to Ms. Streatfeild's own level of achievement. It starts off in much the same tone and manner as the others I am familiar with, but not only does she seriously undermine the entertainment of the plot and characters by attempting to create a more serious tone and manner, but she fails to develop the young supporting characters in the manner to which we have become accustomed (it's all right if the grownups are fairly limited, dimensionally speaking, but her children are almost always very human and believable. I believe it's one of the ways we see she's a genius: she can make a fully-dimensioned, relatable human being in a very few words.) *and she switches out the main character on us!!!* And leaves the original main character off to the side like last year's birthday present. so sad.

So, despite the usual cast of comfortable, lovable grownups, contrasting scary grownup, believable hardships overcome in a believable manner, whimsical and humorous narration, and clever little line drawings for illustration, I have to say this book is not nearly up to par, and pretty darn disappointing.
