



Harry Sue

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Harry Sue Clotkin is tough. Her mom's in the slammer and she wants to get there, too, as fast as possible, so they can be together. But it's not so easy to become a juvenile delinquent when you've got a tender heart.

Harry Sue Details

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From Reader Review Harry Sue for online ebook

Sarah Beth says

This book wrecked me. WRECKED me. I picked it up, thinking I'd read it leisurely over the weekend, and quickly found that I couldn't put it down. It's really, really good for about 2/3 of the book, and then it gets REALLY, REALLY GOOD. I read it at a coffee shop and started crying but couldn't put it down long enough to leave and go someplace quiet.

The only word I can think of to describe this book is miraculous, and I don't mean that in a cheesy way. More like how I felt after reading *Owen Meany*, which was, of course that was supposed to happen. Don't be fooled by those nerds who call it a children's book. It's an everyone book, and especially a people who have a heart book.

Allison Parker says

Somewhere between *Matilda* and *The Great Gilly Hopkins* lives Harry Sue. The daughter of two convicted felons, Harry Sue knows you've got to be tough if you want to survive on the inside. The "inside," in her case, is the prison of her grandmother's house: it may appear to be a charming daycare, but don't be fooled. Both the littlest crumb snatchers and eleven-year-old hostages alike are cons in this place, where Grammy is negligent on a good day and downright abusive on a bad one. Harry Sue's got the crumb snatchers' backs; they're small, but hey, they're her crew. Another road dog (check her joint jive dictionary) is her neighbor Homer. Homer and Harry Sue both survived falls: for Homer, it was a diving accident that left him a quadriplegic, serving a life-sentence in a useless body and a custom treehouse. Harry Sue? Her fall was when she was crumb snatcher herself and her drunk daddy decided to throw her out the window. Homer is fascinated by her story, and by miracles in general, and tries to help her find her mom, incarcerated who-knows-where thanks to Granny's secrecy. But Harry Sue's got to be careful around her crew, her mysterious new art teacher, and perhaps one day, even her mom; because if you want to survive your time, you have to guard your heart.

Paula says

I ran out of library books so started combing my shelf and found this little gem that I read when it first came out and fell in love with it all over again. Harry Sue doesn't have it easy -- with both parents in jail, her best friend paralyzed, and living with her horrid Granny. Harry Sue tries her darndest to be tough, but her heart seems to keep getting in the way. At first she thinks a life of crime so she can be with her mom is the way to go, but then she realizes caring about people isn't so bad. A funny, wonderful read that only Sue S. can do! Enjoy.

Angela says

I enjoyed reading this book because Harry Sue tells her story of how her life has turned out after trying to find her mother. I liked the way Harry Sue told the readers that her life has completely changed after falling

from the 7th floor of her apartment at 5 years old. Also, her parents are interesting because her mother cared a lot of about her, her father just wanted to be with Harry Sue's mother, and the grandma- she is the worst grandmother ever. She has a day care for kids and treats them like animals. Harry Sue also has a huge crush on the boy who decided to be her friend, Homer Price, who was paralyzed. Before her quest to living a crime-filled life she must save the kids who stay in her grandmother's day care center.

Amy says

A fictional retelling of some true life horrors that have occurred to some "crumb-snatchers", read children. Harry Sue is a young girl stuck living with her evil grandmother since both of her parents have been incarcerated...her Dad for almost killing Harry Sue and Mom for the meth lab in the kitchen.

Written in the first-person narrative the story is told from Harry Sue's perspective, she wants nothing more than to land in the joint so she can be with her Mom. The problem is her soft heart and the responsibilities she assumes on the outside...taking care of the daycare children that her grandmother regularly neglects and her quadrapalegic friend who refuses to leave his treehouse.

This book is full of rich interesting characters, but written for young audience, so it's a quick read that wraps up like a summary of a story. I would have liked to have read more about the relationship between Harry Sue and her grandmother, who neglects young children in a daycare she runs. Her grandmother typically neglects and ignores Harry Sue, but obviously wants to do so much worse. I would also have liked to have read more backstory regarding Harry Sue's parents.

Overall a great read if you have a couple hours to kill.

Prasad says

This book is a beautifully written reminder of the value of friendships, and is an appeal to sensitivity toward the child in all of us. The author pays and conveys exquisite detail to the nature of human interactions, which makes it a heartwarming (and at times heartbreaking) read. The story is a creative composite of real-life characters and events while also maintaining parallels to the classic story of Dorothy from Wizard of Oz.

JJessica KennedyDAWS says

Eleven-year-old Harry Sue is being raised by her neglectful grandmother. Both of her parents are in prison. Determined to reunite with her mother, she is striving to become a criminal. Problem is Harry Sue's too soft hearted. In spite of her best efforts to be a troublemaker her soft heart keeps getting in the way.

Her best friend knows all about doing time. Homer's a quadriplegic that lives in a tree house., The way Harry Sue sees it, Homer's got a life sentence. A wacky therapist is showing him how to live. As Homer starts to have a life, Harry Sue finds glimmers of light in her own life. Maybe prison isn't the answer.

Peppered with prison lingo Stauffacher introduces readers to a complex character struggling with the good and bad aspects of her inner self. Harry Sue so wants to be bad, but she just doesn't have it in her to be bad

like she wants and believes she needs to be. Written for children in grades 4-7 the complexity of the protagonist is at once simple and complex and can be enjoyed by readers of all ages.

Karen says

This is a totally different format than any YA book I have ever read. The “Joint Jive Glossary” that precedes the story is mandatory for those of us who have never been incarcerated. Harry Sue is a likable character despite everything she does to be despicable. As hard as she tries to embark on her crime spree in her heartbreak quest to be re-united with her mother in jail, she is foiled at every turn in her inability to allow others to suffer or be hurt. As far-fetched as the storyline is, very few people will not be able to identify with some part of it. Regarding Harry Sue's love of the book The Wizard of Oz, Sue Stauffacher says in her Notes and Acknowledgements at the end of the book, “But most importantly, in connecting with the characters from Baum's story, Harry Sue is doing what librarians and passionate readers have always understood: stories can sustain us in times of great trouble. They comfort and inspire. I hope we never lose sight of the importance of imagination and of stories as a tool for combating despair.”

As I started this book I didn't think I was going to like it and nearly gave it up, but I am very glad I persevered. The book covers a number of topics other than incarceration and would be a good tool to use with an older child to open up discussions about incarcerated parents, foster care, crime, acting out, friendship and loyalty, disabilities, emotional issues, and especially the importance of screening your day care center!

Michelle M. says

Harry Sue
By: Sue Stauffacher / 290 pages

This novel is about an eleven year old girl, Harry Sue, whose childhood is far from a fairy tail. She strives to pull herself out of the deep hole her family has dug for her every day by turning to her favorite book, The Wizard of Oz. It was her mother's favorite book and the last one she read before being sent up. Her parents are both in jail. Her father threw her out of a seven story building as an infant and is locked up for the rest of his life. Her mother, in an effort to get her only child to the emergency room, left her Meth lab and order forms right out on the kitchen table. The lab was discovered when the police came to check for evidence of her father's crime. Harry Sue has been living with her rotten grandmother for as long as she can remember. Her single goal in life is to get sent to the joint in an effort to find her mother. There's only one problem with her plan, Harry Sue's heart is big and soft. Nothing like she needs to get sent to the Big House! Her best and only friend is a quadriplegic who can only move his neck and tongue. Harry Sue's grandmother barely even recognizes her existence. She never even looks in her direction. All efforts Harry Sue makes to get a record always seem to backfire on her.

This is a remarkable story of a young girl, whose future seems lost forever, finding love in the most unlikely places. She'll have to trust and put all her faith in complete strangers. They may be her only hope of restoring her hope from the tiny spark that lingers within her.

KidsFiction Teton County Library says

J Stauffacher

There's a lot going on in this enjoyable book told from the perspective of eleven year old Harry Sue Clotkin. Harry Sue was placed in the custody of her grandmother when her own mom was arrested and taken to jail. Since then, Harry Sue has been dreaming of being reunited with her mom, specifically thinking that the best way to do that was to become a criminal herself and land in jail, also. In the meantime, Harry Sue was placed in the custody of her paternal grandmother, an evil woman who runs an in-home daycare that is detrimental to the young children placed in granny's care. Despite her best attempts at being a cold hearted criminal (or at least a trouble maker), Harry Sue's actions prove otherwise as she continuously cares for the neglected children at the daycare; reads to and inspires her best friend, Homer, who was paralyzed in a diving accident; and decides to save the life of her school enemy when a prank goes too far.

Even with lots of contrived side plots (including a new teacher who is a former Sudanese "Lost Boy" and his girlfriend who is the zany new physical therapist for Homer and a widow of a paraplegic), the author manages to draw readers into this story to the very end. Harry Sue's narrative is very entertaining and includes lots of "joint jive" (or Conglish - a combination of English and con lingo), for which there is a glossary in case readers need it (I did!).

Read this book to find out if Harry Sue can successfully get out of her evil granny's house and back with her incarcerated mom - if she can even find her! Don't let the seemingly difficult subject matter deter you from reading this because despite all the heaviness of the various plot lines (Sudanese refugees, racism, paralysis, drug use, family abuse, etc.) this is a really light hearted, funny, and pleasant read.

Kim B. says

Why did this not get any Newbery recognition? Really, come on now, it was at least worthy of an Honor. (Was it because people find it too hard to pronounce her last name? According to her website, it's STOFF-ICK-ER. Not that hard, folks.) Or was it the... strange cover art of the hardcover? (I hope not; I happen to be more fond of the hardcover than my paperback version, and books with weirder covers have gotten Newbery recognition before...) Certainly, it's more distinguished than many kid books these days.

This book did most of the things found in a trying-too-hard book by an inexperienced author, and did them better than many experienced authors probably could have. Even if your tolerance for quirk is rock bottom, this book is so realistic and down-to-earth that it won't hurt you at all. I think only a person meaner than Harry Sue's granny could dislike it. Gotta love the con lingo and the crazy re-telling of "Little Red Riding Hood," which really must be read to be believed.

Buy it and read it, now. Do not be put off by its relative obscurity. It's a hidden, gleaming diamond amongst the rocks.

Bruce says

You may have heard about a boy named Sue. Now meet a girl named Harry. Just before her mother went to

the joint for making crystal meth in the kitchen, she told her daughter, “You aren’t the kind to invite trouble, so I had to do it for you. You need practice to stand up for yourself properly. No girl named Harry Sue gets pushed around. She’s the kind that goes down fighting.”

Harry figures that the only way she’ll see her mother again is to become a juvenile delinquent and get sent up. But she has a problem, and she knows it.

“Unfortunately, I had a heart condition that needed fixing before I could begin a serious crime spree.

Yes, Fish, my heart was as lumpy and soft as a rotten tomato. I couldn’t stand to see things hurt, especially anything weak and defenseless.”

Lucy says

Harry Sue is the daughter of two felons (a con and a conette), and she’s doing her own time while she waits to get herself thrown in jail and reunited with her mother. But meanwhile, she has a whole mess of crumb snatchers (children) to rescue from evil Granny Clotkin’s abusive day care, and her best friend, the quadriplegic Homer Price, won’t come out of his treehouse. And Baba is the only teacher to believe in backstory more than detention, and Anna is a crazy J-Cat who may just know what’s she’s talking about.

It’s not easy being a conette with a life sentence, but with the help of her friends, Harry Sue will learn that you can survive with a heart of corrugated iron, but to really Live requires opening yourself up, even if it feels like taking a pounding to the heart.

This is a fantastic, gorgeous, brilliant and smart book. I’m not usually a big fan of books that require you to follow the lingo—I usually find it tired and annoying—but one readthrough of Harry Sue’s Conglish dictionary and I had no problem knowing what she was talking about. Her story is painful and wonderful at the same time. Harry Sue feels so strongly about things, even when she doesn’t want to. And her relationship with her quadriplegic best friend Homer Price is one of the greatest best-friend relationships in middle grade fiction history.

And that’s not even getting into the imagery from *The Wizard of Oz* that the book is peppered with.

This book is really, really smart, and it has a lot of heart. I want to read it again, and again, and again.

Alicia Evans says

Filled with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* references. Harry Sue is a child whose father and mother are both in jail for various crimes. It is Harry Sue’s life goal to someday go to prison herself so that she may be reunited with her family. For now, she lives with her grandmother, an evil, self-centered woman who runs a day care and neglects everyone in her care. Over the course of the book, Harry Sue meets new characters and learns to trust people, even though she wants instead to harden herself for her future life in prison. Part of the

joy that comes from reading the novel is finding all of the points that match with Baum's text and Harry Sue is quick to point out some of them for the reader. Oz was the one book that her mother read to her before she was sent to prison so it becomes a connection that she is ready to highlight. However, not all of the allusions are made by the narrator and it is up to the reader to find them. Issues of ethics, identity, and abuse, though the tone makes the book extremely fun to read.
