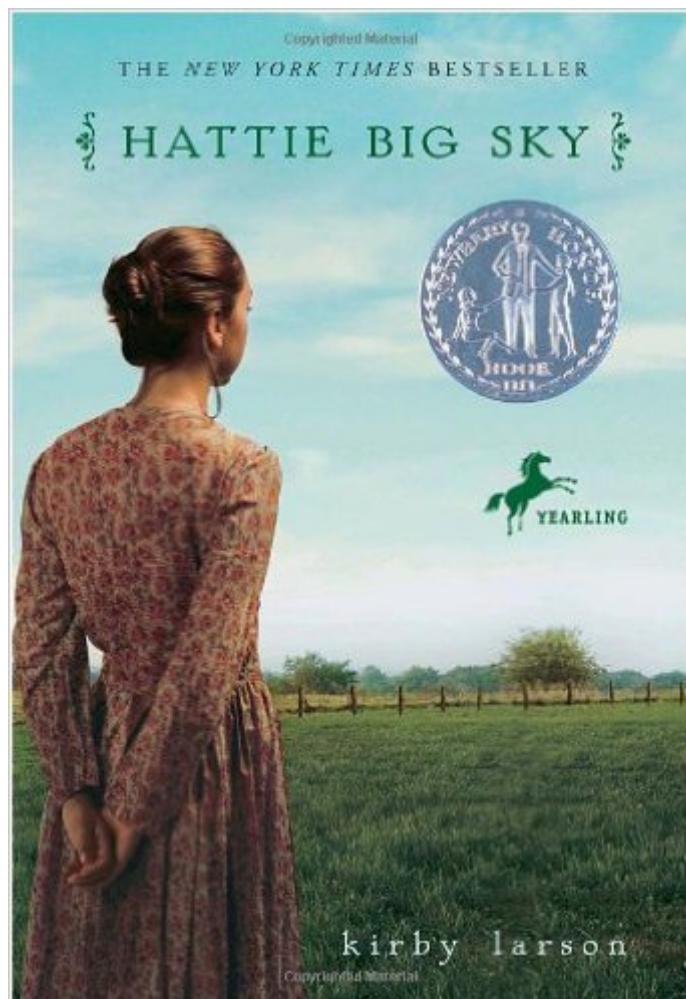


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Hattie Big Sky



Synopsis

This Newbery Honor winning, A New York Times bestseller celebrates the true spirit of independence on the American frontier. For most of her life, sixteen-year-old Hattie Brooks has been shuttled from one distant relative to another. Tired of being Hattie Here-and-There, she summons the courage to leave Iowa and move all by herself to Vida, Montana, to prove up on her late uncle's homestead claim. Under the big sky, Hattie braves hard weather, hard times, a cantankerous cow, and her own hopeless hand at the cookstove. Her quest to make a home is championed by new neighbors Perilee Mueller, her German husband, and their children. For the first time in her life, Hattie feels part of a family, finding the strength to stand up against Traft Martin's schemes to buy her out and against increasing pressure to be a loyal American at a time when anything "or anyone" German is suspect. Despite daily trials, Hattie continues to work her uncle's claim until an unforeseen tragedy causes her to search her soul for the real meaning of home. This young pioneer's story is lovingly stitched together from Kirby Larson's own family history and the sights, sounds, and scents of homesteading life. A AN AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION BEST BOOK FOR YOUNG ADULTS A SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL BEST BOOK A BOOKLIST EDITORS' CHOICE NAMED TO 13 STATE AWARD LISTS "A marvelous story about courage, loyalty, perseverance, and the meaning of home." --Newbery Award-Winning Author Karen Cushman From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars A See all reviews A (126 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #57,816 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #86 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States #312 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States #2697 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Imagine that you're a children's librarian surrounded by piles and piles of books for kids, all published in the year 2006. How do you choose amongst your various titles to figure out what to read next? Do you pluck up the books with the shiny foil covers and catchy titles? Do you zero in on the 400+ page titles that all have "Book One" or "First In the [blank] Trilogy" somewhere on the cover? Do you stick only to those books written by authors you've loved time and again? For me, the decision to sit down and read, "Hattie Big Sky" was helped immensely by this first sentence on the authorial bookflap: "Thanks to her eighth-grade teacher, Kirby Larson maintained a healthy lack of interest in history until she heard a snippet of a story about her great-grandmother's homesteading by herself in eastern Montana." And we're off! As someone who also couldn't have cared less about history and historical fiction for most of her natural born life, Larson's declaration right from the start that history was never her bag came as quite the wake-up call. Plus the result of her newfound interest in history is this remarkable little book recounting a single girl's wish to go out into the world and prove herself to others. You couldn't have it any other way. It's December in 1917. American involvement in WWI is in full swing and Hattie Brooks has just found herself the proud new owner 320 acres of land on a homestead claim in Montana. Left to her by a hitherto unknown uncle, this unexpected inheritance is just the thing Hattie's been looking for. Orphaned when she was young, the girl has bounced from family member to family member so often that she feels a little like Hattie Here-and-There. Now, with a big beautiful piece of land entirely her own she feels like she's Hattie Big Sky.

"Hattie Big Sky" is highly recommended for children ages 10 and up. Hattie Brooks has moved from relative to ever-more-distant relative most of her young life. When she is sixteen years old, she reaches the end of her line with Aunt Ivy and Uncle Holt (he's a distant cousin). Or so she thinks. Just as Aunt Ivy is about to send her off to work as a maid, Hattie Brooks receives a letter informing her that her mother's brother left her a land claim in Montana. She has one year to work the land, make it profitable, fence it off, pay her taxes and it will be hers. Hattie takes her chances and the train out West. Hattie arrives to Wolf Point, Montana where she is met by Perilee and Karl Mueller, her homesteading neighbors, and their three children, Chase, Mattie, and Fern. They help her settle in her Uncle's "house," and show her how to survive the winter and care for the horse and cantankerous cow. Even the children know more than Hattie: Chase has to detach Hattie from the

well pump on her very first day. Though life is hard, Hattie is up to the challenge and works to survive on her own. Kirby Lawson has created a wonderful character in Hattie. She's a tough girl, willing to work to make it on her own. But, Hattie is more than just determination--she's also kind and compassionate without being silly or sentimental. In 1917 Montana, anti-German sentiment is strong, yet Hattie stands up to her wild Montana neighbors and supports her friend Karl Mueller when he's attacked, both physically and verbally, for being German-born. Even Hattie's feelings for her school friend, Charlie, who is away at the front, are true to character: "So maybe I did spend a night now and then dreaming silly girl dreams about him, even though everyone knew he was sweet on Mildred.

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