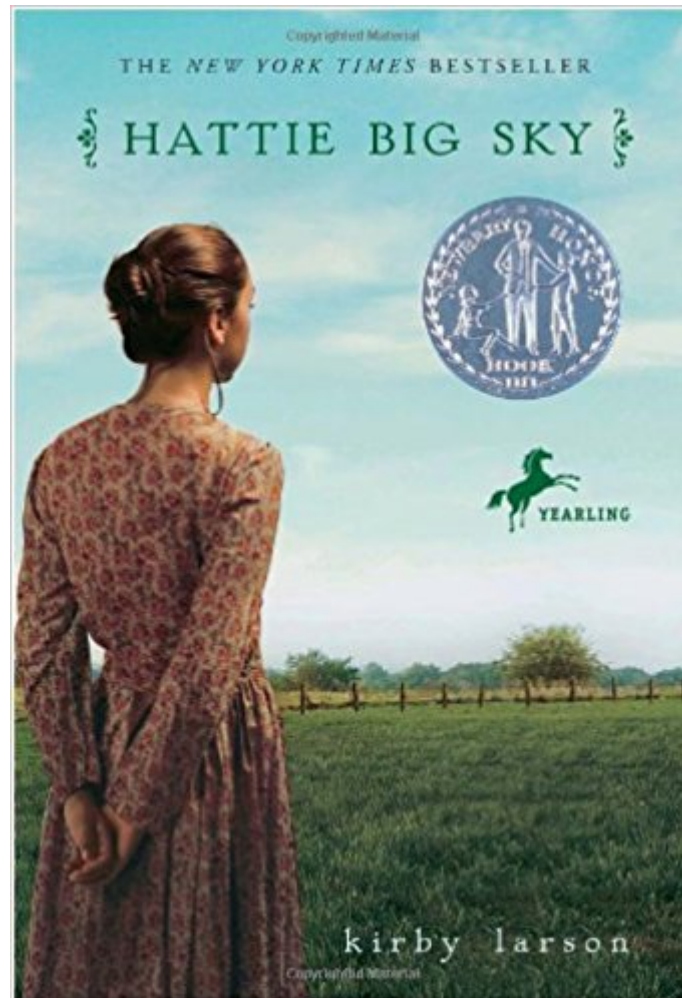




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Hattie Big Sky



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Synopsis

This Newbery Honor winning, #1 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. 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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> Girls & Women

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Starred Review In this engaging historical novel set in 1918, 16-year-old orphan Hattie Brooks leaves Iowa and travels to a Montana homestead inherited from her uncle. In the beautiful but harsh setting, she has less than a year to fence and cultivate the land in order to keep it. Neighbors who welcome Hattie help heal the hurt she has suffered from years of feeling unwanted. Chapters open with short articles that Hattie writes for an Iowa newspaper or her lively letters to a friend and possible beau who is in the military in France. The authentic first-person narrative, full of hope and anxiety, effectively portrays Hattie's struggles as a young woman with limited options, a homesteader facing terrible odds, and a loyal citizen confused about the war and the local anti-German bias that endangers her new friends. Larson, whose great-grandmother homesteaded alone in Montana, read dozens of homesteaders' journals and based scenes in the book on real events. Writing in figurative language that draws on nature and domestic detail to infuse her story with the sounds, smells, and sights of the prairie, she creates a richly textured novel full of memorable characters. Kathleen OdeanCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

“Larson creates a masterful picture of the homesteading experience and the people who persevered.”
—School Library Journal, Starred

I use this book for an EFL literature class, and my students find it pretty accessible to them. I enjoyed reading it along with them over a five-week sequence, as it highlights a strong female character in a difficult environment. There's plenty of material in the book from which to garner discussion in class, something any EFL reading teacher looks for in their students as a sign of emerging fluency. The story itself has many layers and is indicative of the depth of a lot of good literature (which I use in class to contrast against early Disney movies, many of which are rather simplistic and straightforward). However, as a reader, I think some of those layers are incomplete. The WWI angle regarding Americans' fear of immigrants was broached but not with any sense of resolution. Not that there needs to be a happy, simple resolution, but the storylines regarding the story's main immigrant and the group of antagonists that sought to maintain their brand of patriotism

seemed rather abandoned late in the book. There is a lot of historical context that Larson brings up without going really deep enough into parts of them that might have illuminated the plot further. Nonetheless, I think if readers are looking for a character that emphasizes the empowerment of women and (more importantly, as it turned out in this story) the empowerment of youth, *Hattie Big Sky* is a fairly extensive sketch of a personal narrative that should keep readers engaged. The main protagonist feels real without the sense of angst and embellished heroism we see in a lot of YA novels popularized and turned into movies. As a reader, I enjoyed the story, and as a teacher, I would recommend it to any literature teacher who is looking for alternatives to the Great Books that may be inaccessible to students who need a good stepping stone into deep extensive reading.

I liked this story because it speaks of a girl who went to an unknown area and persevered despite hardships she encountered. I got a small idea of what it must have been like for a person who was an American citizen, but with an immigrant past to be considered an enemy; despite not having done anything but being born abroad. I also appreciated the book references to recipes and true experiences of those who actually settled this land.

Hattie Big Sky by Kirby Larson This novel reveals much more than the difficult life on a homestead in Montana. Sixteen-year-old Hattie Inez Brooks may be a single girl preparing for the adventure of a lifetime, but she had no idea what she would encounter under Montana's big skies. Within a handful of months, Hattie created lifelong friendships, cultivated a difficult terrain, stood up to bullies, and overcame obstacles time and time again. Kirby Larson does a phenomenal job sharing a new perspective into the first World War. This book encourages readers to look past a person's name and appearance and to look deeper into the person's character. Another aspect of this book that I appreciated was that Larson fostered empathy for others through this pioneer's story. This historical fiction novel is a wonderful read that I encourage others to put on their book list!

Incredibly impressed with this historical fiction novel. Kirby Larson engages the reader into learning about homesteading life in "Hattie Big Sky." I appreciate the author's clever writing skills which capture both the attention of my tween kids and myself! Very well written, difficult to put down.

Loved it, I specially liked the main characters strength and warmth. A great book for any age. I will go on to book number two.

This novel is very well written, but unfortunately, at least to me (21 year old male college student) the subject matter of the novel was very bland and repetitive. We are constantly reading about Hattie's on-goings, which are non-to-thrilling being on a farm in the middle of Montana. However, Hattie is a great character, and so are many of the others in the story, such as the wild and quirky Rooster Jim. By no means is the literary quality of this book severely lacking; it's simply the dullness of the setting in this realistic novel, which makes it difficult to get through for myself. I would imagine anyone with an interest in the early 1900's farm-life tales would greatly enjoy this book, as well as anyone interested in a well-told adventure about a growing, capable, and extraordinary sixteen-year-old girl.

My 11 year old daughters were required to read this for school. We all three enjoyed the book very much. Great read for middle school students.

Read this book with my ten year old daughter. The strength of Hattie's character and hard work make an excellent roll model for a Young girl. Set at the time of war made many interesting discussions about topics not usually discussed in fifth grade. The discrimination against Germans, like Karl, helped he see some of the tragedy of war. Another great theme is that of bullies and being bullied. Hattie knew she couldn't stand by and do nothing while a man is bullied but had to overcome great fear to do what she knew was right.

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