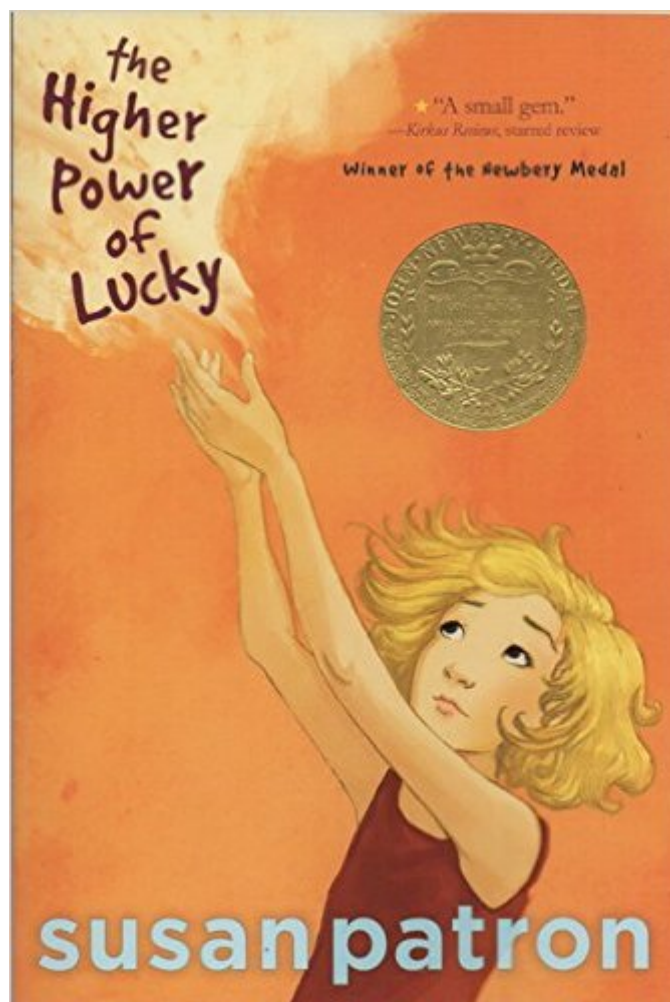


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The Higher Power Of Lucky



Synopsis

Lucky, age ten, can't wait another day. The meanness gland in her heart and the crevices full of questions in her brain make running away from Hard Pan, California (population 43), the rock-bottom only choice she has. It's all Brigitte's fault -- for wanting to go back to France. Guardians are supposed to stay put and look after girls in their care! Instead Lucky is sure that she'll be abandoned to some orphanage in Los Angeles where her beloved dog, HMS Beagle, won't be allowed. She'll have to lose her friends Miles, who lives on cookies, and Lincoln, future U.S. president (maybe) and member of the International Guild of Knot Tyers. Just as bad, she'll have to give up eavesdropping on twelve-step anonymous programs where the interesting talk is all about Higher Powers. Lucky needs her own -- and quick. But she hadn't planned on a dust storm. Or needing to lug the world's heaviest survival-kit backpack into the desert.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1010L (What's this?)

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Atheneum Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (December 30, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1416975578

ISBN-13: 978-1416975571

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.5 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (118 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #223,299 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #36 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Drugs #253 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Orphans & Foster Homes #382 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Fiction

Age Range: 9 - 11 years

Grade Level: 4 - 6

Customer Reviews

I bought this book for my 8 and 11 year old boys. And then I bought more for presents for my friends' kids. The idea that some librarians are choosing to keep this book off the shelves due to the use of the word "scrotum" right at the beginning of the book is more offensive than the word. Reality check: my boys have lots of words for that part of the anatomy, it's about time they read the proper

word used in context of another boy saying it. Surprisingly, if it is the "word" that stuns people, then they haven't read the book and thought about how stunning it is to consider a child (Lucky) listening in on a variety of 12-step groups. But those two aspects, and all the rest of the "shocking" things that happen in this book, are all absolutely appropriate, and beautifully written, to make this book something special. I highly recommend "Lucky", and I fully agree with the age suggestion assigned it (9-12). My 8yo thought it was awesome, but then, he is in the 4th grade. My 11yo loved it. The reality is kids in this age range have all kinds of scary ideas and powerful curiosities. Being able to read about Lucky going through such things gave my kids the opportunity to think about and talk about all kinds of things. As a family, we thought this was an excellent book. As for the librarians and teachers who think they don't want to have to give a vocabulary lesson on the word scrotum, ask them how many times they have heard boys in the 9-12 age range yell a variety of less savory words for that part of their anatomy. The scientifically correct word is always worth teaching. Read it for yourself, and see.

Lucky has not had it, well, lucky. Her father has abandoned her, her mother died in the desert, and she lives in a tiny dusty town of 43 residents. Lucky's town, Hard Pan, doesn't have much going for it. There's an improvised beauty salon, a post office, and the Found Object Wind Chime Museum and Visitor Center. Lucky cleans up the Visitor Center, and spends her time eavesdropping on the Anonymous meetings (smokers, drinkers, overeaters, and gamblers). She likes their stories and she's especially inspired by their search for the Higher Power. If only she, Lucky, could find the Higher Power. Then she could stabilize her life. At the moment, Lucky doesn't feel that stable. She lives with her guardian, Brigitte, a Frenchwoman and Lucky's father's first wife. Brigitte is homesick, still speaks to Lucky with French terms of endearment, and, most importantly, has kept her passport. Lucky knows what that means: Brigitte will leave her in Hard Pan and head back to France. Brigitte and Lucky live in an improvised home, comprised of three trailers linked together and mounted on concrete blocks. She has one friend in town, a knot-fantatic named Lincoln, and is followed around by a sad 5-year-old boy named Miles with a penchant for cookies and "Are You My Mother?" Lucky resolves to follow the twelve step program, embarking on the "next step after rock bottom, the getting-control-of-your-life step." She decides to run away during a dust storm, taking a survival pack of her own design with her. Better leave than be left. "The Higher Power of Lucky" is a charming, powerful tale for the younger Middle Grade reader (7-11). Susan Patron uses the Anonymous metaphor to good effect here. As Lucky herself explains, "It's almost impossible to get control of your life when you're only ten. It's other people, adults, who have control of your life,

because they can abandon you." Isn't that the truth? Lucky is a scrappy young protagonist and a straightforward narrator. She's also an intelligent girl, interested in biology and Charles Darwin, and means well in her search for the truth. The reader roots for her in her attempt to take control of her life, even when she makes mistakes, and is thrilled when she finally finds home.

Boy, a lot of people need to quit clutching their pearls in horror and just get over it. To dismiss a book entirely because of a word (and the CORRECT word at that, not a crude euphemism) is ludicrous; one wonders what would have happened if the slang equivalent had been used. There's a lot more to this book than the "s" word. The opening of the book establishes that this story takes place in a plain-spoken town in the real world. Unfortunately, the controversy over the word has overshadowed this bittersweet tale. There is a silver lining to the controversy: nothing is more tempting than forbidden fruit. Those who may not have considered reading this book will be sure to seek it out, and many will then end up reading a story they enjoy. I'll bet they won't even think much about the "word" once they get into it. I enjoyed reading about Lucky's world: the hard, dusty life in a remote California town, and the people who populate it. My favorite character was Miles, a five year old boy with a penchant for cookies and a certain picture book that, in the end, proves to be a much more poignant choice of a book than it first appears. But that's the joy of this book: even in such a relatively small book, all the characters, even those who only appear briefly, are multi-layered people with their own history. That's good writing. Susan Patron (a librarian herself) has written a good book. Just read it and enjoy it. As for the rest, just let it go.

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