



The Sky Is Falling

Kit Pearson

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It is the summer of 1940, and all of England fears an invasion by Hitler's army. Norah lies in bed listening to the anxious voices of her parents downstairs. Then Norah is told that she and her brother, Gavin, are being sent to Canada. The voyage across the ocean is exciting, but at the end of it Norah is miserable. The rich woman who takes them in prefers Gavin to her, the children at school taunt her, and as the news from England becomes worse, she longs for home.

As Norah begins to make friends, she discovers a surprising responsibility that helps her to accept her new country.

The Sky Is Falling Details

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From Reader Review The Sky Is Falling for online ebook

Melissa W says

I first read this book when I was about 12 or 13 and read it again when I was in my mid-twenties and enjoyed it both times, although my second time reading it has left more of an impression. While it is a story of two siblings leaving home as a result of WWII, it is also a story of a young girl who is about 11 or 12 being forced to grow up beyond what she wants and expects. While Norah is rebellious, she is only so due to the fact that her hosts, especially the mother, pays little attention to her, thinking that Norah is adjusting fine, when in fact she is probably not adjusting as well as her younger brother is. It also doesn't help that she is leaving home at time in her life when she is starting to not only rely on her parents for advice, but also when she has established a life in her small English village.

Erin says

One of my favorite book series as a young elementary student. I think it was around that time that I became interested in history. "The Sky is Falling" tells the tale of two fictional children, Norah and Gavin, who along with other British children enter and live in Canada during WWII. To me it added another facet to our countries involvement far beyond that of our veterans that we saw on Nov. 11th.

Kerri (Book Hoarder) says

This is another book that I remember well from reading when I was younger...

Did you know that during World War II, many children were sent overseas by their parents, to be away from the perils and emotional stress of war?

The Sky Is Falling tells the story of two such children - ten year old Norah and five year old Gavin, who feel as though they only have each other when they are sent across the ocean to live with Ogilvies, a host family who are willing to take them on.

The last thing that Norah wants to do is go across the world to stay with strangers, and it's not easy to fit into a new country, or with a new family far away from home. I still remember how vividly I empathised with Norah, struggling to fit in at school and terribly ashamed when she finds herself wetting the bed again on top of already feeling unwanted at her new home.

With the war so far removed from our times, I think this book is an important one to read and consider for readers of all ages for the story it tells, taking us back to the chaos of war-time and how it affected people of all ages.

Rebecca says

This book was chosen by my colleague for my Mother-Daughter book group and I'm incredibly happy she picked it!

Not only did the mothers love it, but we ended up fighting over who gets to read the next one on their kobo (I won as I had already downloaded it!).

The story is a simple one- Norah and Gavin are children living in Britain whose parents decided to send them to Canada to avoid the bombing of WWII. They are sent to a rich mother and daughter in Toronto and the story is just about Norah adjusting to her new life.

The story is simple, but the characters are complex and their development is what makes this story touching and beautiful.

I'm a huge fan of Kit Pearson- I've never given her anything less than 5 stars but this one just blew me away. Norah just lept of the page for me. Her anguish, confusion and anger was just palpable. The story was wonderfully written and being an immigrant myself, I could really sympathize with Norah as she tried to find her way in her strange new home.

Memorable story full to the brim with emotional characters and simple yet elegant writing by one of Canada's best children's authors.

EnviroTodd says

This was a surprisingly powerful book. It is one of those books that when I finished it, it was like I'd done something important. It's not the type that I would usually choose, but I am glad to have read it. It's one that I would recommend to just about anyone. It's a fast read because you can't put it down.

Graili says

I read this book in seventh grade and had a lot of difficulty putting it down. It was one of the best books I'd read at the time and a favorite.

The characters were excellent and developed. It was also really easy to identify with Norah, the main character. Usually I have trouble doing that.

It was also a chance to look at different part of WWII history and of course there were plenty of amazing details about Toronto at the time.

I really love and and recommend this book.

Emma says

In the summer of 1940, ten-year-old Norah and her friends spend their days watching the planes fight above their village in Kent. The war has certainly brought excitement to Norah's life, but all parents see is the danger. Once they decide to send Norah and her five-year-old brother Gavin to Canada until the war ends, Norah realizes that there is no way to persuade them otherwise. While the ship ride from Liverpool to Montreal is full of excitement, the idea of living with strangers in a foreign country terrifies Norah. After staying at a University in Toronto for weeks, a family is finally found for Norah and Gavin. The only problem is that they originally only wanted a boy. Mrs. Ogilvie and her grown daughter live in an enormous

house in Toronto. While Mrs Ogilvie immediately fall in love with Gavin, she shares Norah's stubbornness and the two clash almost instantly. While a girl from her village is also in Norah's class at school, the teacher treats Norah with sarcasm and the students tease her and call her a coward for leaving England. When the war might be go on for longer than Norah first believed, she has to find a way to accept her new home.

I first read this book maybe twelve years ago and I loved the series. However, I recently read Kit Pearson's newest book, *The Whole Truth*. I found it disappointing, and that made me doubt whether *The Guests of War* trilogy was as good as I remembered. The first book in the trilogy follows Norah as she and her brother leave England for Canada during the Second World War. I was probably ten or so the first time I read this book, but this time it was just as hard to put down. It's one of the best historical fiction books I've read for children. I might be a bit biased towards this book because it takes place in Canada, but I thought Pearson realistically portrayed World War II from the eyes of an English child forced to leave her home. One thing I found rereading this book in my twenties is that it was much more of an emotional read than it was the first time. As Pearson points out in the afterword, for some children being guests of war may have been an adventure, but Pearson did an excellent of conveying what it was like for some children who didn't want to leave (like Norah.) While Norah could be much too headstrong and stubborn at times, I think her actions were very realistic. Who wouldn't act out when they're forced to leave everything they've ever known and live somewhere completely different than what they're used to? Plus, Norah is only ten-years-old. I will definitely be rereading the other books in the series, the last of which is told from Gavin's point of view. Overall, this book is a must read for children interested in World War II.

5/5

Iris says

I loved this! It was so cool to read about the lives of the many children who were sent away to Canada from England to find refuge from the war. Although in Norah (the main character)'s case, she hated living with the Oglivies. All she wanted to do was go home and many people even called her a wimp from escaping from the "exciting" war. But as the novel goes on she realizes what it means to adapt, to nurture and to start fresh in her new life. LOVE, LOVE, LOVE!!!

Samantha says

Except for J.K. Rowling, Kit Pearson was absolutely my favourite author growing up. I first read this series in grade three or so, and probably rocketed through them another dozen times as a kid, along with everything else she ever published. Norah was far and away my favourite heroine, because she was so real, not at all like the flat, perfect characters in other books I'd read. It was okay to have feelings, Norah taught me, and it was okay that they weren't always nice, and yes, it was fine to not like your kid brother sometimes. The WWII backdrop sparked my interest in both the time period specifically and history (and historical fiction!) more generally, an interest I've kept up ever since. I've often wished I could meet Kit and tell her exactly how much her books meant to me (and maybe one day I'll do that Awake and Dreaming tour and tell her so for real!) My original copy of *The Sky is Falling* came from a library book sale, and I read it so often that its cover came off and had to be tucked inside the title page for safekeeping.

I haven't read these books in years, but the Penguin Classics editions showed up on Overdrive the other day and I couldn't help but grab them. To be perfectly honest, I was a little afraid I'd be bored, reading them as a grownup, and was pleasantly surprised to find that the opposite was true. A major reason these books are so

good is that Pearson doesn't talk down to her audience: the horrors of war, while not generally front and centre, are made clear. Pearson's grasp on what it's like to be a young girl experiencing trauma is very, very good, and in some ways I think I was able to appreciate it more now as an adult than I could as a child (it's also entirely possible that I just cry a whole lot more readily as an adult than I did as a 10-year-old). There's more nuance here than I could easily pick up on as a kid, and I'm glad I decided to re-read these as a grownup. Norah's relationship with her parents and the Aunts, how difficult her parents' decision to send her and Gavin away really was, the singular horror of going out for lunch and coming home to find your house flattened, the reality of living in a new place...all of it continues to resonate. I still love these books.

Isabel says

Convincing story of two British children sent to Canada for safety during World War 2. Rebellious Norah does not want to go, preferring to stay at home and fight the good fight. She resents taking responsibility for little brother Gavin. Spirited Norah meets her match in her foster-mother.

Realistically portrays the adjustments a child must make to a new country, and to growing up.

Miss Amanda says

gr 4-6 248pgs

1940 Ringden, England. 10 year old Norah and her 5 year old brother Gavin are forced to leave their tiny village because their parents want them to go to Canada where they will be safe from the war. Norah is furious with her parents for sending her and Gavin is too young to understand. When they arrive in Canada, they are sent to live with Mrs. Ogilive and her adult daughter Mary. Mrs. Ogilive spoils Gavin who reminds her of her son Hugh who died in WWI, while Norah feels that all Mrs. Ogilive does is order her about. Norah's adventurous spirit is always getting her into trouble with Mrs. Ogilive. Norah can't wait for the war to be over so she can go home!

Great story about "war guests" in Canada. I would recommend this story to someone interested in WWII.

Amanda says

gr 4-6 248pgs

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to be over so she can go home!

Great story about "war guests" in Canada. I would recommend this story to someone interested in WWII.

Just A. Bean says

I liked the main character. She was probably pretty horrible to be around but the author had a good handle on the thought process of a ten year old.

I can't say I found the plot that interesting, for one there wasn't much of a plot, especially in the later half, and what there was didn't have much action. Unfortunate that a book about WWII refugees would be slightly dull. Probably won't bother with the other two.

Charlotte says

Fabulous nostalgic visit to the book every 9 year old Canadian girl read when I was growing up. This books holds its own as an adult.

Dana says

As a kid, this was my favorite book. Norah and Gavin are two siblings from England. They are growing up in WWII. For their protection, they are sent against their will (especially Norah's) to Canada to live with a host family to keep them safe.

I haven't read this in a while, but I liked it so much as a kid that I just might read it again.

Rebekah says

I read this book for a sixth grade assignment, for which I had to make a film strip with sound effects and give a class presentation. I returned to this book more than once when I was young. Though I have not read it for many years, I still remember how vividly it affected me as a child and would recommend it for any young reader.

I also remember how much fun I had working on the film strip sound effects with my father. We did so much with a few low cost items, most of which we already had around the house -- no professional tapes for us! The teacher loved our efforts and kept my project over to use as an example for future classes, a rare honor for me.

Tegan says

When Norah and Gavin are told they are going on an "adventure", Norah is outraged and Gavin does not understand what is happening. Norah, aged 10, and Gavin, aged 5, are to be evacuated to a safer location. It

is the middle of World War 2 and their parents are worried. Norah and Gavin are sent to Canada where they live with a nice but strict and stubborn family. Their journey over is full of surprises and learning experiences. As Norah adjusts to new rules and lifestyles, how will Gavin adjust to a life without his mommy? When Norah decides to do something rash, will it change her life forever, or will it make her closer to her host family.

As the first in a series of 3, this book sets the standard very high. It is very emotional and it definitely makes you think about what that would be like. Norah is very easy to relate to in some ways, and it is impossible to not feel bad for Gavin. I loved the way the author stuck to the facts as much as she could, and how realistic the fiction parts were. I did not like that it was so sad. It made me cry for ages. I would recommend this book to all ages. Younger children will look at Norah and see a kindred spirit, while adults will think about how hard it would be for the parents and other adults in this book.

Dawn says

World View - Secular

Read Aloud 12 yrs+

Independent Reader 14 yrs +

Setting:

Location - Britain, Toronto, Ontario

Time Period - WWII, 1940, Battle of Britain

Review

This is book one in the War Guests Trilogy. Although it is a highly acclaimed book which contains high quality writing, the questionable moral values conveyed during the story raise concern in regard to the target audience. It seems to be aimed toward grades 5 or 6, however I would suggest that it is far more appropriate for an older reader who is less likely to emulate Nora's behavior.

It follows the story of two young British children being sent to Canada to escape WWII. It is an emotional story told from Nora's perspective. The author does a wonderful job of demonstrating how scary and stressful it must have been for young children to be sent from their homes and parents to a strange place. Nora tends to be somewhat nasty to everyone almost the entire time. This is understandable, as it makes sense that some children would definitely act out under those circumstances. The adults tend to be unpleasant, controlling or wishy-washy. They are introduced only through a child's eyes so although they are somewhat one sided, they are believable making Nora seem very alone.

Sadly, one of the strong underlying themes of the story seems to be the idea that you may be dishonest as long as you word it correctly and you feel justified in doing so. Nora lies to her parents, teacher, guardians, friends, the librarian, a police man and her brother. Aunt Mary lies to Aunt Florence. Aunt Florence asks Nora to lie through omission, asking her not to tell her parents that her brother is being kept home from school. To be clear this is not one sweeping lie that has grown out of control. Almost all of these incidents are stand alone situations where Nora deceives someone then justifies her actions. If you believed the message conveyed by this book, none of these instances were lies because they were "only" carefully worded deception and misleading remarks not exactly outright lies. Although Nora is called on her poor relationship and attitude towards Aunt Florence the book never directly addresses her dishonesty. It mentions that she can

now write an uncensored letter to her parents later in the book, but that is the extent of it. This theme has made an otherwise educational story inappropriate for the age group it was written for, as it seems to condone dishonesty.

Teacher Application

Nora tends to be selfish and self centered looking at the world from her very narrow point of view. This is understandable as a child's view of the world is based solely on their small experience. This however might lead to a very one sided understanding of the War Guest situation. It is important that students understand the sacrifice made by the families who hosted the war guests. The planning and preparing involved in bringing them to Canada in a safe and orderly manner to protect both the children and the Canadian population should also be discussed.

Students need to understand that children were dying in Britain. Parents weren't being over cautious or paranoid. The fear of a German invasion was very real, and many people were killed in the bombings. Parents sent their children not because they wanted to, but because the alternative was so bleak.

This story doesn't touch at all on Canada's roll in the war other than to take in war guests. As such this needs to be paired with teaching on what Canadians did in Europe.

Parental Warning

Dishonesty condoned repeatedly: See review above.

Disrespect of Authority:

Nora is very disrespectful to everyone in authority over her. Even after she makes amends with Aunt Florence she continues to disrespect her behind her back. "How wonderful to be able to be so wicked, to make fun of her Aunt Florence with someone who knew her!"

Church is presented in a negative light:

"Grown-ups seemed to go to church to observe and gossip and waste valuable time." Although some children may feel this way, it is a disrespectful and somewhat ignorant thing to say without any reference to the adults' beliefs or indication that the author has any understanding of the Christian faith. It would have been far better if she avoided this statement at all.

Macklin says

Read this in Grade Four for a book report. I did not like it because I was reading it for school.

I have read three times since then and got my mom to read to me. She read the rest of the trilogy to me as well and yeah I love it.

This was my first Kit Pearson book and to this day she remains my favourite Canadian author. I have read all her novels and have enjoyed every one of them. I like how she makes the country not this barren cold land, but one that is full of life and people.

Kirsten says

I received this book from a friend when I was 10 - she forgot about my birthday party and didn't show up, but still managed to give me a gift which, in my books #punintended, makes you an A+ person. I had never really read historical fiction before, and was willing to read anything and everything someone put in my hands, so I started reading without hesitation...

And absolutely CONQUERED this book.

This book brought reading to life in a whole new way for me. In this book I discovered my interest in history, the horrors of war, and the power of writing to move you to places you never knew you could be moved. I connected with Norah on so many levels - as I'm sure many young girls did - and I found myself passionately angry at her parents for sending her away, righteously indignant that Aunt Florence could spoil Gavin so much, and heartbreakingly sad that Norah wasn't with her parents for Christmas. This book hit the Middle C #teamromo in ways I could never begin to describe, and reading it again all these years later I am still blown away by the innocence, honesty, and brilliance that is Kit Pearson's writing. I recommended this book to many people while working at Indigo, and was overjoyed to rediscover that I wasn't wrong in doing so.

This book makes me ache - for those families destroyed by war and life's cruel ability to snatch away the innocence of youth at so young an age. Absolutely beautiful.

Fun side note: now that I've lived in Toronto, I can actually picture everything that was being described. As a kid I had no idea where Yonge and Bloor was, but now I can picture it and smile like an idiot to myself as I say to myself "I lived there!" Ah, the simple joys of being a former Torontonian.
