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The Same Stuff As Stars



Synopsis

Angel Morgan needs help. Daddy is in jail, and Mama has abandoned her and her little brother, leaving them with their great-grandmother. Grandma is aged and poor, and doesn't make any attempt to care for the children that's left up to Angel, even though she is not yet twelve. The only bright spot in Angel's existence is the Star Man, a mysterious stranger who appears on clear nights and teaches her all about the stars and planets and constellations. "We're made out of the same stuff as the stars," he tells her. Eventually, Grandma warms to the children and the three begin to cobble together a makeshift family. Then events in Angel's life take yet another downturn, and she must once again find a way to persevere.

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

Customer Reviews

Few authors explore the theme of what defines a family with more compassion and sensitivity than Paterson (*The Great Gilly Hopkins*; *Flip-Flop Girl*), as she demonstrates once again in this contemporary novel set in rural Vermont. Eleven-year-old Angel Morgan, despite her youth, is the head of her family. With a father in jail for robbery and murder, and Verna, her mother, too preoccupied with herself to care for anyone else (she once "forgot" her children in an all-night diner),

Angel looks out for her seven-year-old brother. She keeps a house key around her neck and taxi money in her sock, "just in case." Before long, Verna proves Angel's fears well founded, when she drops the children off at their great-grandmother's house and leaves in the night. Paterson enters Angel's consciousness through a third-person narrative, revealing, for example, how the girl rationalizes Verna's erratic behavior ("How could anyone expect her to know about being a good mother? She couldn't remember having a mother of her own") as well as the way Grandma's (as they call her) ramshackle house transforms into a welcoming haven with a nearby library and a pasture with a view of the night sky. At the novel's center is Angel's blossoming friendship with a mysterious "star man" whom Grandma calls "Santy Claus." He leaves food and chopped wood at the door, and introduces the heroine to galaxies beyond their own. Angel's intelligence and abiding trust in the direst of situations will convince readers that, despite the unresolved ending, she will rise above her circumstances. Ages 10-13. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 5-8-Paterson has once again crafted a beautifully written, wonderfully told story that exposes some of the most disturbing parts of our society while at the same time teaching the value of each and every person. She returns to rural Vermont in this tale of Angel who, in her nearly 12 years, has attended eight schools and twice been in foster care. She is more a parent to her seven-year-old brother, Bernie, than their frequently drunk and unreliable mother or their father, whom they visit weekly in jail. Their mother abandons Angel and Bernie at the ramshackle farmhouse of their great-grandmother, who is too aged and poor to care for children, and when she returns for just Bernie, Angel's loneliness is as immense as the night skies that a kind stranger teaches her about. The man turns out to be her Uncle Ray, a Vietnam vet whose life has been damaged by drugs and jail time, yet who convinces her that she is made of the same elements as the stars. The enchanted night sky gives Angel perspective on her life; it becomes a metaphor on many levels in the novel. As always, Paterson conveys great respect for the poor, and for preadolescents in tragic circumstances who have the resiliency to transform themselves. A new novel by Katherine Paterson is cause for great celebration and this one more than measures up. Angel Morgan will take her place in readers' hearts right next to Lyddie, Gilly, Lupe, and Jip. Connie Tyrrell Burns, Mahoney Middle School, South Portland, ME Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a copy/paste from my Goodreads review. It's The Great Gilly Hopkins but on a darker level. I

recommended *The Same Stuff as Stars* once to an elementary school girl but she later told me she couldn't finish it because it was too sad. Now that I've had the chance to review it again, I have to agree with her. This is a depressing story where the main character faces trials of poverty and neglect that would leave any normal child scarred for life. Just when you think it might be getting better, it keeps getting worse. Only Katherine Paterson can tackle such realism by weaving in the faith she was raised on yet not come across in her writing as preachy. The writing is her usual high quality storytelling with strong setting, plot and characters. The story does drag in some places but her usual style shines as bright as the stars we get the opportunity to learn about. The only issues I have with the book is #1-killing off my favorite character. Those who've read the book know which one I'm talking about. #2-how did this family living in poverty manage all those hospital bills at the end without Obamacare? If this is your first Katherine Paterson book I recommend reading some of her other award winning books first because there's a reason this story didn't win any.

Without a doubt, my two favorite writers for young adults are Madeleine L'Engle and Katherine Paterson. Ms. Paterson has written a number of novels (*Bridge to Terabithia*, *Jacob Have I Loved*, *Lyddie*, etc.) that are among the best I've ever read. This novel may not reach the heights of some of her previous books but it is still a worthwhile read. I have probably shed more tears over Katherine Paterson novels than any other writer except, perhaps, Dickens. They both have an incredible ability to create realistic characters that you can really feel for as well as a deep perception for the effect that death and abandonment can have on people. As I began reading *The Same Stuff As Stars* I didn't think this novel would have the same effect but I must admit that it did. In the character of Angel, continually abandoned by everyone around her but still a strong girl, Paterson has done it again. It is her ability to create these realistic characters, however, that also turned me off to this book. I found the characters of Verna and, in particular, Bernie to be so unpleasant that the first half of this novel was nearly unreadable for me. Once these two characters disappear from the novel, I liked the book to be much better. But is it really fair to dislike a book because the characters are created too well? It's a personal assessment but a fair one, I think. But this book still has many things to recommend it, not the least of which is the astronomy motif which appeals to me very much as a math and physics teacher. Another personal assessment, perhaps, but it works both ways. Ultimately, this is a book that still rates better than just about anything out there. I would highly recommend it.

Katherine Patterson is an amazing author. This book was written extremely well. I would have given

it 5 stars if not for the storyline, which was a little confusing.

Why do we act the way we do? Is it because we are the same stuff as the stars and are as stable yet unstable as they are? Paterson has again written a book about forgiveness and acceptance, which to me is the theme of many of her books. I was hooked on this book early on and reminded a little of Bridge to Terabithia (a favorite) as well as The Great Gilly Hopkins. Paterson's story may help readers understand life. For folks (old and young) who wonder if life is worth living, this book should help them figure it out. It's a great "read by one-self" or "read-to-others" book. The characters are very real and the situation quite plausible. The trio of books (Gilly, Terabithia, and Stars) would make a fabulous author or theme study.

Love it this book is amazing and my grandmother would love it love it love it love it love it!!!!

Katherine Paterson seems to have more home-runs to her credit than a Major League Baseball Hall of Famer. And this book is no exception. Not too bitter; not too sweet. It's just right and speaks to the heart.

This is a very powerful book. Angel shows such a powerful strong character. I recommend this book!!! Love this book!!!!

Patterson's story of Angel will grab you from page one. She is a survivor, as she deals with one flaky mom and a convicted father. Then when she befriends the starman, you see her find even more self-confidence. I loved the star metaphor in this book, and the relationships of brother, Grandma, and Angel. I plan to share excerpts with my middle schoolers.

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