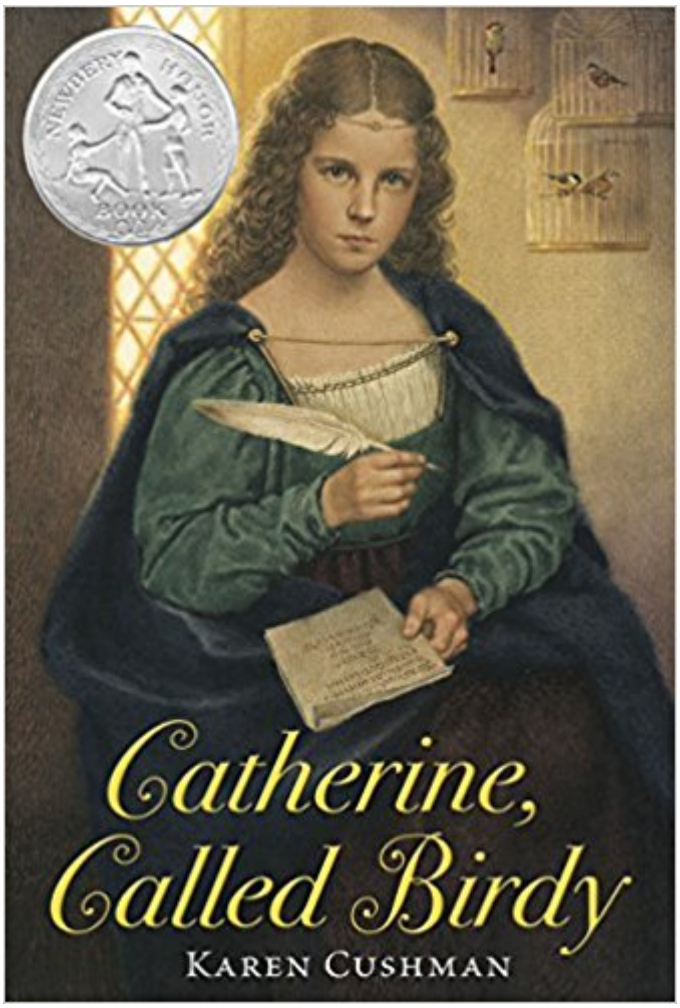
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Catherine, Called Birdy



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Synopsis

Catherine, a spirited and inquisitive young woman of good family, narrates in diary form the story of her fourteenth yearÃ¢â ¬â •the year 1290. A Newbery Honor Book.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1090 (What's this?)

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (June 19, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0547722184

ISBN-13: 978-0547722184

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.4 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 416 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #36,166 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #23 inÃ Â Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Medieval #30 inÃ Â Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Europe #256 inÃ Â Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Girls & Women

Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

Customer Reviews

"You can run, but you can't hide" is the rather belated conclusion reached by Catherine, called "Birdy" for her caged pets, in this fictive diary of a medieval young woman's coming-of-age and struggle for self-determination. Escaping regularly into a fantasy life of daring escapades and righteous battles, Birdy manages to postpone the inevitable sale of herself as a wife to a very unwelcome suitor. Just as she resigns herself to her fate with the comforting knowledge that "I am who I am wherever I am," word comes that she will not have to marry the oaf after all. Birdy's journal, begun as an assignment, first wells up in the reluctant and aggressive prose of hated homework, and then eases into the lighthearted flow of descriptive adventures and true confessions; the narrative device reveals Birdy's passage from rebellious child to responsible adult. Despite the too-convenient ending, this first novel introduces an admirable heroine and pungently evokes a largely unfamiliar setting. Ages 12-up. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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Grade 6-9-This unusual book provides an insider’s look at the life of Birdy, 14, the daughter of a minor English nobleman. The year is 1290 and the vehicle for storytelling is the girl’s witty, irreverent diary. She looks with a clear and critical eye upon the world around her, telling of the people she knows and of the daily events in her small manor house. Much of Birdy’s energy is consumed by avoiding the various suitors her father chooses for her to marry. She sends them all packing with assorted ruses until she is almost wed to an older, unattractive man she refers to as Shaggy Beard. In the process of telling the routines of her young life, Birdy lays before readers a feast of details about medieval England. The book is rich with information about the food, dress, religious beliefs, manners, health, medical practices, and sanitary habits (or lack thereof) of the people of her day. From the number of fleas she kills in an evening to her herbal medicines laced with urine, Birdy reveals fascinating facts about her time period. A feminist far ahead of her time, she is both believable and lovable. A somewhat philosophical afterword discusses the mind set of medieval people and concludes with a list of books to consult for further information about the period. Superb historical fiction.Bruce Anne Shook, Mendenhall Middle School, Greensboro, NCCopyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Few books that take place in the middle ages give you a such a generous picture of every day life. The constant proximity of animals, the crowdedness before the single bedroom made its debut, the odd mix of fun and celebration in the great hall with the fasting and penance that religious life brought, the clear view of marriage as anything but an affair of the heart and the ordeal that child-bearing meant for even those who survived -- all of that is clearly drawn.Less plausible for me was the casual way Birdy took the bruises and beatings that were administered almost as matter of course by her father and the lack of real soul-searching as Birdy herself harmed others (either truly, as when she set fire to a privy that someone was in or when she thought she had harmed her cousin George and her dearest friend with a charm to destroy their love for one another.) Perhaps the times made that much of a difference (this is a point that is hard to prove or disprove since we have little record of the hearts and minds of these girls and women) but I cannot think of any moderns who would not think a little more deeply about these things. Although she is drawn here as "plucky," Birdy’s attitudes are often hard to credit. Lastly, although Birdy is often described as treating illness there is no clue as to how she may have learned those skills. That would have been interesting as it’s hard to imagine her listening to a teacher rather than just being sure she already knew the best thing all the time.

This is my favourite novel from my childhood. I read it so much I had to buy another copy because the first fell apart. I love Catherine. She fights to be herself in a place where she is expected to be a certain way. She learns to work around the limitations she's been given. She never stops trying. And she lands herself in some hilarious situations along the way. She showed me what it was to be independent at an age where I wasn't sure what that meant. This book also inspired my love for medieval England and British history. Highly recommend, especially to anyone with a young daughter.

Birdy is a girl ahead of her time. Trapped in well-to-do medieval manorial life, she tries to invent ways to escape both the place and the people surrounding her. Birdy is funny, sarcastic, wry, observant, sensitive toward folks she respects and merciless toward those she disdains. The story, written as a diary, moves smoothly through Birdy's trials and schemes and reactions. She's someone the reader would like to know personally, if only for the fun of hearing what she'd say next. But probably no reader would want to switch places with Birdy and feel caged for life as Birdy does. In the end she does escape, though not in the way she expects or to the extent she'd choose. There were serious limits on women then, even for those who had money. The one element of the story that I found difficult to believe was Birdy's acceptance of her father's physical brutality. I would think she'd suffer more inside herself because of it. But that's my only caveat about this book, which I definitely enjoyed.

I enjoyed the book very much. The thing that makes me wary of historical fiction is the trap of planting a modern-thinking person into a historical period and go from there - I find this false and jarring - and this novel definitely avoided it. I found Catherine convincing and endearing. Having only general education in history, I can't offer any reliable opinion on historical accuracy, but I didn't detect anything obviously sticking out. The frame of the story is a journal a 14 year old Catherine writes about her life. I liked the way Catherine developed and grew up, and the way the supporting characters turned out, seen through the merciless black-and-white of teen's eyes. I recommend it!

Very funny and very descriptive of life in medieval England such as dung along with herbalist in some of the medicinal preparations, the out house, I loved Buddy she takes on life with such energy and the Saints and their feasts days are quite imaginative and some gross. Buddy can both read and write very unusual for her day also in her way of getting rid of the sisters her father (the beast)

has tried to Mary her of too at the age of fourteen. It’s not all fun and mischief there are is the fear of losing her mother in childbirth and being the one to doctor the wounds and ills not only of the household but the village as well. If you love stories set in medieval England you’ll love this book.

Whoever came up with the idea of Kate Maberly performing this was a genius. Kate’s clear voice, sometimes sweet, sometimes impish, is simply perfect for this young heroine. Her British English is an added plus to bring a touch of reality to the fictional character. Kate and crew, well done! well done!In addition to enjoying this clever audio book, American kids especially might have fun trying to pick up a little of Kate’s crystal clear accent (for instance, the word "adventure" comes out something like "ad-vench-a" with a strong "ch" like in "church" or "itch", and with no "r" sound at all). It might surprise some kids to know that Kate can speak a typically American dialect flawlessly.This audio version, which won a well-deserved Audie award, needs to stay in a hard-format print for a long long time to come.

My 10 year old daughter read this. It was, I think, her most challenging read yet. There is a lot to understand both in terms of vocabulary and in terms of how people lived in medieval times. Among other things I had to explain that people were engaged and married (and bore children) at a very young age and that it was acceptable for a parent to hit their child often. A bit of an eye-opener for her, but she’s a mature kid and asks when she has questions, and it was OK for us. She loved the book, and gained valuable insight into the life of a girl living in another time and place.

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