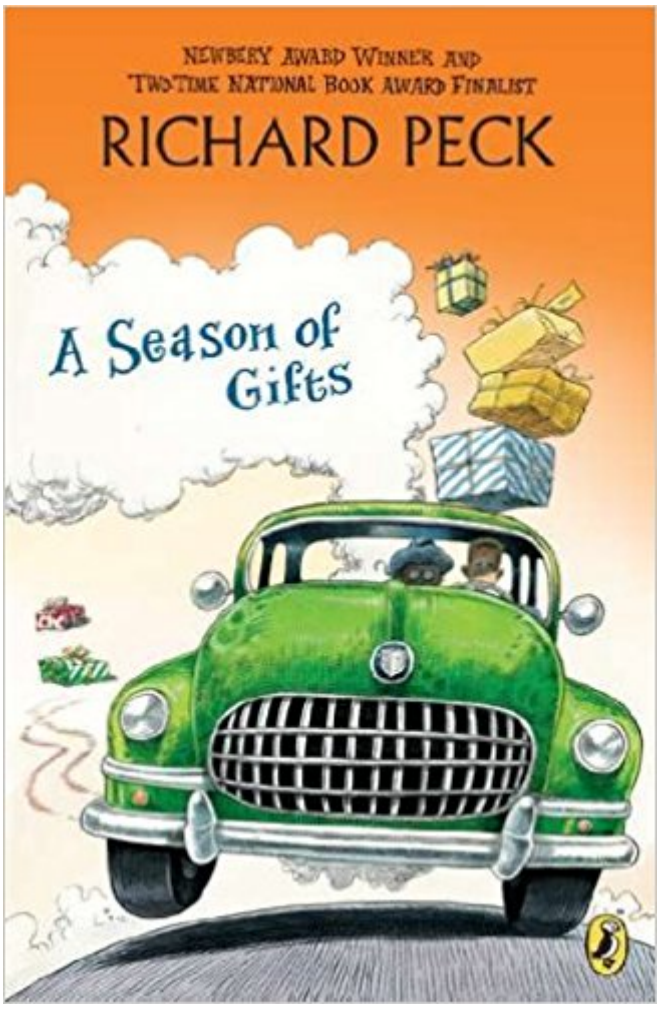
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A Season Of Gifts



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Synopsis

One of the most adored characters in childrenÃƒâ ¢s literature is the eccentric, forceful, bighearted Grandma Dowdel, star of the Newbery AwardÃƒÂ•winning A Year Down Yonder and Newbery HonorÃƒÂ•winning A Long Way from Chicago. And it turns out that her story isnÃƒâ ¢t over. ItÃƒâ ¢s now 1958, and a new family has moved in next door to Mrs. Dowdel: a minister and his wife and kids. Soon Mrs. Dowdel will work her particular brand of charm on all of them, and they will quickly discover that the last house in town might also be the most vital.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0690 (What's this?)

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 5Ã¢â ¬â œ8Ã¢â ¬â •It's been a long while since readers last enjoyed a season with Grandma Dowdel, and what a startling, hilarious, and touching season it is. It is now 1958, a time when Elvis is king and the glow of television sets has replaced sitting on the porch for an evening. Yet as much as things have changed, Mrs. Dowdel has remained pretty much the same, living alone in the last house in town, pushing 90 and still toting her rifle, cooking up a storm and taking down the neighborhood hoodlums. What's new are the PKs (preacher's kids) who've moved in next door, including the 12-year-old narrator, Bob Barnhardt, an unassertive boy who has the misfortune of being welcomed to town in a most unneighborly fashion. Mrs. Dowdel intervenes

and helps out the Barnhardts in her own inimitable way, proving herself as clever, capable, and downright amazing as ever and allowing Bob and his family to see just what a gift of a neighbor she is. With a storyteller’s sure tone, Peck has once again created a whole world in one small Illinois town, a place where the folksy wisdom and generosity of one gruff old woman can change lives.Ã¢â ¬â •Teri Markson, Los Angeles Public Library END --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

-This is one of Peck+s best novels yet-and that+s saying something.+-Kirkus Reviews, starred review

I teach 4th grade and have entertained my students with tales of Grandma Dowdle for many years. My students love her as much as I do. This book does a great job of teaching that the best gifts don’t come wrapped with ribbon and are often priceless. I recommend this book to everyone.If you haven’t read "A Long Way To Chicago" and "A Year Down Yonder", you should read these two book first--in the mentioned order.

This is a story of a pair of siblings and their visits with an outrageous Grandma. The 1950 is the time, and those of us who lived as children in those delightful 50s will get a whole lot more enjoyment out of this book than the young adults of today who will likely not relate as well to many of the events. Few can even imagine an outhouse.The story is more than Christmas, although it does get around to that season in the last 30 or so pages. Other topics are other seasons like Halloween. Many young adults can’t relate Halloween to anything but toilet papering. I remember when guns really did go a-blazing to scare off tricksters. Other events are loaded with humor, such as a funeral, revival services, ghosts, Indian Summer, well, the list is as long as the 17 chapter titles.This is third in a trilogy about Grandma Dowdel. Both "A Year Down Yonder" and "A Long Way From Chicago", the other two, were Newbery winners. That means good, real good. And Richard Peck has also provided many other stories, some for adults, although like I said, I think this is more for older adults than young adults. I loved his "Amanda/Miranda". And another young adult good read is "The River Between Us." Look up Richard Peck and order, used or new, but order his books.And a favorite line in the beginning of the Christmas season was: "Mrs. Dowdel staggered backward in her gum boots when she came to the pink (flocked Christmas tree.)"I remember when flocked trees began as a fad, and also when they died, like aluminum Christmas trees with the revolving colored spot light. Maybe ya have to be there--I was. Born in 1948.Fun book.

I really hope you've already met Grandma Dowdel in Richard Peck's Newbery Honor book, A Long Way from Chicago, and his Newbery Medal winner, A Year Down Yonder. If you haven't, I recommend you read all three. In the first two books, this powerfully irascible character is hosting her grandchildren. In A Season of Gifts, she is much older but still going strong. We catch a glimpse of her great-grandson, but mostly we see her with the children who live next door.It's sort of astonishing that a book about an old lady could be such a great read for children, but then, Mrs. Dowdel isn't your run-of-the-mill old lady. When children come into her orbit, they are not only baffled, entranced, and entertained, they are also altered. Mrs. Dowdel is more than just irreverent and unpredictable, she is kind, though her kindness is hidden beneath a veil of eccentricity and toughness. Mrs. Dowdel is pretty good friends with her shotgun.This time the story is told by a boy named Bob who moves into the next-to-last house in a small town, along with his preacher father, his worried mother, his Elvis-crazy older sister, and his lost puppy younger sister. The last house in town is Mrs. Dowdel's. At first Bob and his family catch only glimpses of their strange neighbor, but pretty soon their lives are enmeshed in surprising ways. Mrs. Dowdel manages to be a hero and a friend subtly, without taking away the dignity or decision-making power of the people she helps, in this case Bob's family. Bob is being bullied, his father needs a congregation, his older sister is secretly seeing the town bad boy, his mother needs help with all of the other family members, and his little sister needs a grandma.But this would be just another feel-good book without the author's humor, or without his spare, perfectly constructed prose. And I do mean perfect. Here's a sample:"I followed her across the hall and jumped back at her door. To help her settle in, Mother had let Phyllis paint her room in her choice of color. She'd picked a Day-Glo pink that really yelled at you. It was like being inside a stomach."Then Phyllis had painted a stripe of that same Day-Glo pink down the center of the floor and warned Ruth Ann never to set a sandal across it."Phyllis had hung her Elvis Presley posters, all eight of them, around both sides of the room. I know for a fact Phyllis wrote letters to Elvis Presley regularly, though she never heard back. Ruth Ann sat bunched up on her bed, clutching her dolly. Looming above her was a giant poster of Elvis in a cowboy rig and neckerchief, strumming a guitar. Another was Elvis in the gold coat he wore on his tour last year. Elvis was all swooping hair and sideburns and showing teeth in life-size sneers, all over the room. He was everywhere. It was like being in a revolving door with him."'I'm scared,' Ruth Ann said over her knees. She made big eyes up at a poster. 'Don't go out and leave me with him.' She whispered for fear Elvis would hear."The antagonist in A Season of Gifts is the aforementioned town bad boy. The war between Roscoe Burdick and Mrs. Dowdel has apparently been going on for a while, but in

this book, we first meet Roscoe when he bullies Bob in a really creative way involving Mrs. Dowdel's privy (leading to the funniest joke in the book, referring to a famous Bible passage). Later Roscoe takes advantage of Phyllis's Elvis fetish to win her heart, or at least to capture her imagination. But Mrs. Dowdel isn't through with Roscoe, and though she loses a few skirmishes, there's never any doubt she'll win this war. The only question is how she'll do it.It took me a while to catch on, since Coyote and Loki don't usually come dressed up as cranky old women in small-town America in 1958, but yes, I think Mrs. Dowdel is actually that classic mythological character, the Trickster. Mythology or no, I have to say: lucky, lucky us. Because 'tis the season, and Richard Peck has given us another marvelous gift of a book.

Another story in the wonderful saga of Grandma Dowdel. This time the plot revolves around the new neighbors who have moved to town to revive an old community church. Although the provincial reverend and his wife are unsure what to make of the eccentric Mrs. Dowdel, the children take to her right away and somehow she ends up in the middle of their adventures and misadventures. Although not as unforgettable as the classic, A Year Down Yonder, anyone who enjoyed the first Mrs. Dowdel novels, will enjoy this, too.

After thoroughly adoring A Long Way from Chicago and A Year Down Yonder, and believing that there is no adult character in YA literature who holds a candle to Mrs. Dowdel,I was thrilled to see her reappearance. As readers found in those other two books, she has a closet heart of gold and an irreverent, perhaps eccentric, way about her. She lives by the strength of her convictions, which doesn't always sit well in a small Midwestern town ca. 1960 as in this book or in the `40s in the earlier ones. Peck's delightful and reliable style shines as it always does. The new family next door to Mrs. Dowdel is cleverly created. So are the situations which always are in Peck's books. All that to say, this is awfully good. What it isn't, however, is as good as the earlier two. I'd like to see Mrs. Dowdel again. It would be nice to see her when Mr. Dowdel was still alive and maybe when her own children were with her. Read it, and enjoy it, but be sure to get to the other two books with her as Grandma Dowdel to her two grandchildren.

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