



# Bess's Magical Garden

*M.E. Hembroff*

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## **Bess's Magical Garden** M.E. Hembroff

Bess's mother moves them to Pineview, away from her best friend Megan, and she terribly misses her. Six months earlier, Bess's father died in a car crash, and she's also in the midst of recovering from the final stages of polio. She's in a sad and lonely place.

From the moment she and her mother settle into their new home, Bess hears whispering voices and encounters a ghostly figure in the well-kept garden and in her dreams. She can't make sense of everything and so shares her observations with Megan by writing her regular letters.

During the summer, she makes new friends, including an orange and white tomcat that she names Pumpkin, and her new neighbour Josie. With the help of Mrs. O'Toole, the woman who watches her, Bess continues to recover, both physically and emotionally. She becomes more and more curious about the garden and the unexplained clues that she finds there.

In Bess's Magical Garden, Bess discovers her own true strengths through enduring life's struggles. She - with Josie and Megan's help - also finds some hidden items in the garden, including a map, that leave the girls with more questions than answers. Who was the figure that visited Bess? Will Bess and her friends be able to uncover the garden's secrets? Or will those secrets be mysteries forever?...

## **Bess's Magical Garden Details**

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Author : M.E. Hembroff

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## From Reader Review Bess's Magical Garden for online ebook

### **Katy says**

The premise of this story is a good one, and I like the device of Bess writing a letter to her best friend or her diary at the end of each chapter, though the font in the Kindle version is very small and difficult to read. For a children's book of this length, there are too many characters, so none of them has enough time to be fully developed with hopes and dreams and emotions, especially considering that Bess and her mother are grieving. I wanted to see more focus on the girls and their solving of the mystery and less on the many adults. The author has obviously put a lot of thought and heart into this book, and girls who enjoy "old-fashioned" books like Anne of Green Gables or The Secret Garden will like this one, too.

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### **Nia Markos says**

Bess's life has been upturned by the death of her father, her slow recovery from polio and the recent move to Pineview. Being away from her best friend, Megan, who lived next door and was her companion, is also painful for her.

Soon after arriving at their new home, Bess starts hearing whispering voices and sees the ghostly appearance of a young girl in the garden, where she spends her days working on weeding and planting.

Throughout the summer months, the time spent in the garden hastens her recovery. She makes friends with a neighbor girl, Josie, and a cat that follows her around. As they discover hidden items in the garden, the mystery of who the ghost girl is, draws them further into the mystery.

This book is a short read with only 74 pages. It is a great read for children between the ages of 7-14. The lessons of overcoming loss, the importance of friendships, are but a few of the things the author touches upon. Also, for me, it might just motivate younger readers to go outside, enjoy nature and forget about social media for a while.

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### **Laura says**

This is a calm little book, along the lines of Understood Betsy, where the main character, Bess, has come to the country so that she can recover, in this case from polio. Although it is never said, it appears that the story takes place in the early 1950s.

The mystery of the garden is that there was a treasure hunt that happened 60 years before, or so, that was never completed, and Bess wants to solve it, because she keeps dreaming of the original girl who lived in the house, and feels that she is trying to tell her how to solve, or wants her to solve the mystery.

In between this, she gets better, she makes friends, she acquires a full grown cat, and has a pleasant enough summer. As I said, a calm sort of book, no major trauma going on. No big picture here, just a little mystery to be solved.

A little too clam, and simple for my tastes, but then it is a middle-school book, and Bess is likable enough.

Thanks to Netgalley for making this book available for an honest review

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### **Carol says**

Rated: 4.5 stars. I thoroughly enjoyed "Bess's Magical Garden" by M.E. Hembroff. For her first book out of the chute, she did a really good job. I personally find that the book is geared to an audience probably about 8-11 years old, give or take a little. I could kind of identify with the characters and Bess in particular, as I've had physical issues in my older years, but it does make us appreciate the good time and when we are working in good form. A best friend is one of the greatest gifts a person can have, young or old. To see these girlfriends who really like each other really touched me. Another thing that touched me was how good the girls were at writing letters. We've become terrible at writing real letters to those we love and care for. This book is a good reminder of the beauty of letters. There were maybe two or three typos or use of language that could be changed. I really enjoyed the hand drawn art. Thought the cover and the art inside the book was adorable. Very well done. When I was told how to set this up so that I could read the book on my Kindle or another tool, I did what I was told, but only got the sample, about 74 pages. Tried it again a couple times and couldn't get the full book, so finally paid for a Kindle version that I did get the whole book, and very glad I did. I hope if M.E. found joy in this experience that she will try again. There is a lot of potential there. Best wishes!!!!

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### **Taylor says**

It's an okay book. A nice option for kids who have had to move away from their friends to read. However, there are a number of grammatical errors, and treads (very) lightly/gently in the concept of ghosts/spirits which not all families encourage.

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### **Sivkishen Sivkishen says**

Dear Hembroff your attempt on Bees in the magical garden is really appreciable. I want you to focus on their leadership from a little beehive. Wishing you all the best...Sivkishen Ji

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### **Evelyn says**

I received this book from Goodreads Giveaway. This simple book dealt with some really hard issues for children. Bess's father dies in a car crash, her mom moves to a new town and Bess is dealing with polio. Through her struggles Bess is able to learn several lessons about survival, choices, and changes that bring her to a place of happiness. I know my students will really enjoy this book and some may even relate to the struggles Bess is faced with.

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## **Evelyn says**

I received the book for free through Goodreads First Reads. I did not enjoy it at all. It reminded me of some books ("Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories") I had read that were written in the '50s. The language was old-fashioned and I couldn't get past that. My kids, usually bookworms, would not pick up the book because the cover and other illustrations "looked super-boring".

Sorry.

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## **Noelle Walsh says**

This is a good book for kids to read. From dealing with her father's sudden passing, to moving to a new town, to learning to navigate the world with the aftereffects of polio, Bess's tale is one that can help kids learn how to be more accepting and open minded, despite the dark tones this book has.

\*won as a GoodReads Giveaway\*

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## **Tony Parsons says**

Pineview. Bess's father died in a car crash. Her mother moves to another town to start life over again. Bess leaves behind her BFF; Megan. Bess had spent many months in the hospital undergoing Polio treatment & physical therapy. Mrs. O'Toole will take care of her.

Mom took Bess to Snows' General Store/Post Office.  
Mrs. O'Toole's therapy is to take Bess outdoors & plant/work in a garden.  
Josie & Pumpkin (orange/white tomcat) are Bess' new friends.  
Bess & Megan write back/forth quite often.

There are secrets in the Garden Bess, Josie & Miranda (Ava's daughter) solve the mystery?  
I did not receive any type of compensation for reading & reviewing this book. While I receive free books from publishers & authors, I am under no obligation to write a positive review, only an honest one.

A very awesome book cover, great font & writing style. A very well written MS age fantasy book. It was very easy for me to read/follow from start/finish & never a dull moment. There were no grammar/typo errors, nor any repetitive or out of line sequence sentences. Lots of exciting scenarios, with several twists/turns & a great set of unique characters to keep track of. This could also make another great MS age fantasy movie, animated cartoon, or a mini TV series. Probably not for every young teen but I will still rate it at 5 stars.

Thank you for the free Goodreads; Making Connections; Ingram Book Company (Friesen Press); Author; PDF book  
Tony Parsons MSW (Washburn)

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## **Debra Clewer says**

This is a sweet middle-grade story, an engaging tale of a young girl's struggle to overcome the death of her father, moving house away from her cousin who is her best friend, and her recovery from polio. She has a mystery to solve, after finding a number of odd things in her garden which needs some loving care to restore it. This aids in her recovery and development. Author Marjorie Hembroff has drawn on her childhood memories for this book. This is good for background, but I'm not sure whether some of the people, and styles of clothing mentioned from the 1950's would resonate with today's children. I feel that this book would be enjoyed by girls around the 9-11 year age group, especially with the friendship theme running through the story, and most young girls like a mystery. This book is rather reminiscent of *The Doll in the Garden*, by Mary Downing Hahn.

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## **Jill Jemmett says**

This is a cute story. Bess has faced many challenges in her young life, but she takes it all in stride. She has polio, and during her recovery, her father was killed in a car accident. Despite all of this, she is still very innocent and finds simple joys in life.

I really liked the illustrations in this story. They are childlike, but also detailed and precise. They suit the story very well.

There were some inconsistencies in the timeline of the plot which confused me. Marie, who was the daughter of the original owners of Bess's house, was childhood friends with Rae and Mae. Now, Rae and Mae are elderly women, which would mean that Marie would also be elderly. However, Mr. and Mrs. Snow were adults when Marie was a child, which would make them very old now, but they don't appear to be because they are still working in their general store. If this timeline were cleared up, it would have made the story much more cohesive.

The story also had a creepy aspect to it, because Bess had dreams about Marie. This made me wonder about her sanity, but she appeared to be fine. Once she solved Marie's mystery, Bess stopped dreaming about her. These dreams had the potential to make Bess into a creepy little girl, but she retained her innocence.

This is a cute, short book for young readers.

I received a copy of this book in a Goodreads giveaway.

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## **E. Hopkins says**

My apologies to the author, but I could not get into this book. I entered to win Bess's Magical Garden in a giveaway; I didn't win, so I bought the book on Amazon. I found the language strangely contorted, and hard to follow. The author keeps introducing new characters right from the very beginning one after another, and it gets very confusing and very difficult to follow everyone, what they are all doing, and who they all are. I prefer books that lie in a goldilocks-zone of presentation. If everything is too vague and all-over-the-place, the book gets very confusing; however, if everything is slow and overly-explained, there's nothing to keep me interested to find out what will happen next, and there's no room left for the imagination. I found this book to be too much of the first side. It's an interesting premise, but it's sort of already been done before in

The Secret Garden.

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## **Samantha Gunning says**

I won this book via Goodreads First Reads Giveaway. I received an autographed paperback copy.

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## **Rachel says**

Thank you to the author for giving me a free digital copy in exchange for an honest review.

My Review:

I read this book in one sitting, but only because it was quick at 81 pages, not because I was very much into the story.

This book is for children and I think it's important for kids to read. We follow Bess as she and her mother move to a new home. Bess is reluctant at first, just like any kid would be, and she's trying to overcome some things. She's recovering from polio and the death of her father.

The garden and her new friend, Pumpkin the cat, help her get through these tough lemons life threw at her. I think the garden is a metaphor to her healing both physically and mentally.

However, throughout most of the story, I didn't feel as though there was too much going on. The mystery wasn't really intriguing to me and the story definitely moved along pretty quickly, having to be wrapped up in less than 100 pages.

There were a lot of characters thrown into the mix, some I felt weren't even really necessary. At the end of each chapter, Bess wrote a letter to her friend Megan. To be honest, I think the story could have been told simply in letters to Megan.

The writing style wasn't my cup of coffee, but seeing how the book is for kids much younger, I think the writing is pretty spot on.

Overall, this book does have an important message and the main characters were cute.

Bess's Magical Garden by M.E. Hembroff gets 4 out of 5 stars.

Favorite Quote:

"I think that the garden is magical, because it brought Pumpkin to me and taught me to love my life again."  
–M.E. Hembroff, Bess's Magical Garden

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