



The Hermit Thrush Sings

Susan Butler

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In the tradition of Lois Lowry's The Giver, Susan Butler's futuristic first novel tells the triumphant story of Leora's refusal to conform to the rigid rules set forth by a tyrannical government.

Leora has a gift, and a secret. She can see things no one else can, but can only draw them with her one webbed hand.

Several generations have passed since North America was struck by a meteor that changed life forever. Now, Leora lives safely locked inside the walls of Village Three. Only the guards and croptenders are allowed out, where the world is said to be undeveloped and dangerous. Leora's heard stories of the ferocious birmbas -- half bear, half gorilla -- that resulted from the meteor. Mutants cannot be trusted.

But Leora herself is considered a "defective" with her hidden hand and gift. When she risks her life to free a baby birmba, she finds the courage to escape beyond the tyrannical walls without knowing what she may find.

The Hermit Thrush Sings Details

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Author : Susan Butler

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From Reader Review The Hermit Thrush Sings for online ebook

Macklin says

The Hermit Thrush Sings is one of the first dystopian novels I have ever read. I read it first when I was ten, and read it at least once a year in middle school. It tells the story of Leora who has a mutation in a world where mutants are sent to sanitoriums. The world, you figure out as you go along, is ours after a nuclear disaster. It actually reminds me of *The Chrysalids*, but I didn't read that until I got to high school. Leora is an orphan and raised by her aunt. Like *Jane Eyre* she is despised by her aunt and her cousins and eventually runs away when they finally decide she should be sent to the sanitorium. From then on it is how most dysopian novels go. The government is corrupt and needs dismemberment and, of course, there is a resistance group that our intrepid hero joins and eventually, a new world. In hindsight this book is a bit cookie cutter, but since it is the book that defines my middle school years, I am giving it four stars. The story is charming, and I never found issue with the writing. I recently bought the book from Amazon and looking forward to reading it again.

Ryan says

A friend gave me this book a long time ago telling me I needed to read it because they read it and loved it so much. I never got around to it. But an email I get from a local bookstore recently featured it in their picks for their mother/daughter book club.

I picked the book up.. and didn't put it down.. until I got to the end 6.5 hours later. Any other plans I had that day suddenly didn't seem necessary. I can't remember the last time I read anything other than a very short book in one sitting. It's not a long book, but books this length normally take me at least 2-3 days. I added the audiobook to my audible account so I could put the paperback down to make myself food without interrupting the story. The narrator is pretty good so I finished the rest of it while reading and listening at the same time.

This is an excellent book, not just for mothers and daughters. But as soon as I finished it, I ordered a copy for my mother, from her son.

One of the books I remember loving as a dyslexic kid who struggled with reading was *The Giver*. If you ever enjoyed that book, this one is great. I liked it even better.

It is one of my very favorite books I've read so far in 2017, along with *The Girl Who Drank The Moon* by Kelly Barnhill. When this book ends, check that one out. It was also on that mother/daughter book club reading list. That book club should really be a family book club because people young and old of all genders would enjoy these two books. They are both books I would have loved as a kid and I would enjoyed sharing it with all of my family members.

I wasn't expecting this to be a book with disability themes because I try to keep up on diverse reads with with disabled protagonists and I haven't seen this book mentioned on any of those lists. Maybe it was missed because it is a children's fantasy novel and the disability experience in that world is a little different than what people might think about when they think of disability. But it was done very well and has a cross-disability appeal. It will appeal to a diverse group of readers and can be way to start important conversations about all the ways people experience difference. It can build community and connections between people who have different life experiences.

Shaya says

I thoroughly enjoyed the disability politics, radical feminist group, communion with animals, multiracial cast of characters and other social justice themes. And I liked the story. I just found it a bit too predictable. Perhaps this reads very differently to a 14-year-old who is searching for a sense of youth certainty in a world where adults seem to have all the answers?

The revolution was inspiring and the decentralized groups of empowered people overthrowing the government worked surprisingly well. But I did question that no one who we cared about died in the violent overthrow.

So overall it's a great middle grade/young adult book and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it but wished for a bit more complexity.

Liz says

Great kids chapter book! Good themes too. conversation starter about government, racism, bullying, family and more. i loved this book!

The only reason I didn't give it five stars was because it definitely needs a sequel! Not sure if there is one, but not completely satisfied with the ending if there isn't one.

I highly recommend this book! Similar to Hunger Games or Divergent as far as the general plot goes, but appropriate for a younger audience.

Socket Klatzker says

oH mY oH MY! I was going through a phase of not having a good book to sink my teeth into and then bam! Along came this masterpeice. What a great great great read. I won't give it away. It made me repent for ever making fun of sci-fi geeks.

Aerin says

It's been ages since I read this book, but I'm currently trying to convince my school library to get it. I was in elementary school, I know, when I last read this, and I remember it had such an impact on me, even then. The part I remember most was that she sewed her skirt into breeches--imagine my shock! And then the fact that I had to ask my mother what breeches were. *chuckles* But it was a fantastic book, and I presume, remains the same. I just wish I could find a copy of it for my own.

Caitlin says

I really, *really* wanted to like this more than I did. 5-star reviews touted a multiracial- and women-led

revolution and a brief look at gender, disability and human communication with the non-human world. I was psyched. And then disappointed.

Leora *always* knew whether she could or couldn't trust a situation or person and she was always right. Everything always worked out. Bad things almost happened but never amounted to anything. The placement of obvious hints meant that the reader could always anticipate which characters would appear or what events would happen, effectively ridding the story of any plot twists whatsoever.

Because *The Hermit Thrush Sings* is located in general fiction at my library I was expecting something more complex (or mature? I don't know) but this read like juvenile fiction. I don't, however, rate it based on my expectations but rather my enjoyment of the story itself, which wasn't high.

Also something I found annoying was the characters' idealization of the Before Time (our current time). Yeah, things are bad in the futuristic *Hermit Thrush Sings* world but the U.S. is not a democracy and please let's stop pretending it is or ever was.

Anyway, it was just okay and I wouldn't want to read it again. I hope in the future I can find better stories to satisfy my desire for radical social justice oriented fiction.

Nat Smith says

umm here is the list:

women rebels/revolutionaries

multiracial revolution, led by brown folks

connection/communicatiuon between human and animal

a small amount of dis/Ability analysis

gender bending

taking down a racist, sexist, anti-natural world dictatorship

lovely.

Colin says

i've read this book 3 or 4 times now, most recently because I just recommended it to a friend. It's got bad-ass disability politics, a radical feminist uprising, a genderqueer element, a not-too-trite multiracial cast of characters. Oh, and cute animals. What more could one need?

elisabeth says

A small light middle grade dystopian novel about how differences make us strong

Rebecca says

The descendent of a clairvoyant woman who foresaw the the coming of the meteor that destroyed Earth,

outcast Leora is considered a mutant because of her deformed hand and her premonitions of the future. Striking out on her own, she discovers the wilderness is not as dangerous as the dictator who rules what is left of civilization has said it is. She finds the sister she thought dead, and joins a band of rebels who fight for freedom.

Katie says

This scifi/fantasy crossover was original but not pristine. In this futuristic society an asteroid had hit Earth, wiping out civilization as we know it and birthing several species of mutants. Some humans also have mutations and they are locked up in the Institution to protect the rest of humanity. Leora has one webbed hand and the day finally arrives when her Stepmother tries to have her shipped off to the Institution. She decides to run away to the wilderness beyond the walls of the town to find a better life elsewhere. Once outside she finds that her mutant hand seems to have an intuitive understanding of her world that she cannot quite comprehend. With it she can communicate with birmbas (a new-species) and predict the future. It is a little weird that she sometimes speaks of her hand as if it is another creature with its own mind that happens to be attached to her body. Through the help of her hand Leora helps the rebels rise up against the rulers who hold the towns in servitude. Overall the ideas are creative, however the characters and story line are a bit shallow. There are some redeeming moments of friendship and mystery that are enjoyable. Recommended for grades 4+

Karen GoatKeeper says

Leora has webbed fingers on her left hand. In the Maynor of her time, this makes her defective. It also makes her special, although she has yet to discover how.

Once Leora begins to realize what her hand can do, the unrest and dissatisfaction of the people with the Rulers pulls her to be involved. She finds herself being a key to the future for the people and the birmbas of the forest.

I found Leora a bit too dreamy and indecisive. She seems to let forces outside herself make her decisions for her. She just carries them out.

The birmbas are interesting. The book explores how people can be misled by those "sworn to protect them" who have personal motives at odds with what they say. It brings up how people can be convinced something is true because they are told it is true, instead of checking it out for themselves and finding it is false.

The book is easy reading. It is well suited to older middle grade readers.

Valerie says

I only wish there were a sequel. YA sci fic, post-disaster country with mutated plants and animals (and humans) from a meteor that, among other things, caused nuclear power plants to explode. The rulers have carefully kept everyone under their thumbs and it's up to our young heroine to find her own strength and save the day. It really has the feel of more story to come - lots of unanswered questions and unresolved dilemmas.

Kyrsten says

I read this book in the seventh grade because someone else had it and I was jealous. We aren't all perfect. Yet throughout my life from that point I've recalled this book, both its title and its author, simply because it is that incredible. Though it might be written for a younger crowd don't simply overlook it, especially if you enjoy the Hunger Games series. Though they have their comparisons they are still vastly different and deserving to be read and thoroughly enjoyed.
