



A Good Horse

Jane Smiley

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When eighth grader Abby Lovitt looks out at those pure-gold rolling hills, she knows there's no place she'd rather be than her family's ranch—even with all the hard work of tending to nine horses. But some chores are no work at all, like grooming young Jack. At eight months, his rough foal coat has shed out, leaving a smooth, rich silk, like chocolate. As for Black George, such a good horse, it turns out he's a natural jumper. When he and Abby clear four feet easy as pie, heads start to turn at the ring—*buyers'* heads—and Abby knows Daddy won't turn down a good offer.

Then a letter arrives from a private investigator, and suddenly Abby stands to lose not one horse but two. The letter states that Jack's mare may have been sold to the Lovitts as stolen goods. A mystery unfolds, more surprising than Abby could ever expect. Will she lose her beloved Jack to his rightful owners?

Pulitzer Prize winner Jane Smiley raises horses of her own, and her affection and expertise shine through in this inviting horse novel for young readers, set in 1960s California horse country and featuring characters from *The Georges and the Jewels*.

From the Hardcover edition.

A Good Horse Details

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Author : Jane Smiley

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From Reader Review A Good Horse for online ebook

Meaghan says

Reading in between my other books.

-It's a horse book, and unless you love and/or own and ride horses, it can be hard to read.

-This is an older book, I think, so there are some inaccuracies, or at least non-Pony Club approved things. Please excuse me while I rant about horse stuff that will be nonsense to most of you. WHY are there cross country jumps in a showjumping course, HOW could a freaking eighth grader clear 4 feet without regular training, also, why in the world would she jump cross country WITHOUT A VEST!?!?? Does she WANT to be impaled on a fence? Why would she only wear a helmet when she went to shows? Does she WANT a brain injury? And why does she use a freaking HARD HAT? THOSE THINGS ARE OLD AND USELESS!! USE AN ASTM/SEI APPROVED HELMET AT ALL TIMES!!!! Also, NO-ONE uses jodhpurs anymore. If you don't want to buy tall boots, WEAR PADDOCK BOOTS AND HALF-CHAPS!! AAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRRRGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

-This is an okay horse book, but I liked it more before Pony Club had fully ingrained all it's safety rules in my brain, and this book became slightly more horrifying.

Charissa says

My sister keeps pointing out things that are wrong with this book. I picked it up just for fun, and believe me, she was right.

In my sister's words:

First of all, the author jumps right into stuff.

There's another horse series? I thought this was a stand alone!

Second, since when do teenage girls not care about anything? The closest to real emotions I saw was "It was fun."

Third, she seems not to care about the ponies. She keeps on mentioning her dad selling the ponies and not at all feeling sorry for them (like once she said, "Dad expected to get a lot of money for him [the pony], maybe five or six thousand dollars." Why?) She never mentions anything like I'll miss her...

Well, the author made no clear setting or plot. They only mentioned an arena, but I can't picture it at all because they gave no clues about what it looks like.

If you want a book that feels like it's made of recycled cardboard with practically no way of telling who the narrator is besides from the cover, then this book is for you. Enjoy!

Yes, my sister is just as snarky as me. But needless to say, this book ended up being doodle paper for me.

Camille says

LOVED THIS!

scarletraces says

The cover copy of the UK versions of these is somewhat misleading. These are not pony detecting adventures but coming of age (year by year going by the first two) of a solemn, considerate & thoughtful young girl who has been around horses her entire life and is by training and inclination an excellent rider. There's technical horsey stuff too, complete with diagrams (of jump configurations), and because it's Smiley we get some kind of intense Protestant religious background with promises of intolerance explosions to come (the Goldmans, anyone?). Oh and they're set in the 60s, when the author herself would have been around the same age.

Abbi says

I really enjoyed reading this book. I previously read *The Georges and the Jewels*, which is the first book in this series. I loved how the author depicts the horses. She makes them realistic. Many other authors will make horse either good or bad. Horses aren't like that. They have good days and bad days just like people do. I also love how she sets the book back around the 1950s-1960s. I haven't learned much about this time period and reading this book was a good start. I will definitely be finishing the series.

Judy says

Part of me wants to be 10 or 11 again, so I could bury myself in these books as much as I did the *Timber Trail Riders* books at that age.

But I'm not. I'm 62. That said, I've truly enjoyed the first two books of this series for reminding me of the young girl I was. And hey... horse books, right? I never get tired of horse books. :)

Christine says

This is a challenging review to write because my thoughts are all over the place.

The writing: It's excellent. I mean the author is a Pulitzer Prize winner. You don't just buy one of those awards at the University of Phoenix or anything.

Horses: This was way fun to read about horses from someone who KNOWS her equine particulars. If the horse facts are not accurate, I won't wade through the book.

Faith/Scripture: I was shocked at the first mention of faith. (Not having read the first book in the series, and no mention of it on the back copy, I was seriously caught off guard.) I continued reading suspiciously, not sure whether which way the author was going with this aspect (genuine or mocking.)

Foul Language: Technically, there was one instance: arse. But the guy who said it was British, and he was not cussing. For those with gentle sensibilities, you have been warned; for all others, I don't think you will find anything offensive in this novel.

Here are weird/challenging parts for me. Ok, so the book is shelved on the Middle Grade shelf, but the writing seems too sophisticated for 12 year olds. There is not a lot of action. The conflict is internal. And the beauty of the story is subtle. I supposed a mature, horse-obsessed middle schooler will appreciate this work, but I'm skeptical. I enjoyed it, but sometimes I act 12. Its intended audience is definitely not everyone.

I have to say again the horse stuff was top notch. All of it.

By the end of the book I determined that the author was not as knowledgeable about the faith piece. I'm not sure why it was included (my research leads me to believe it was a more integral part of the first book). I don't think the author is a Christian herself, and I don't think her motivations were to reach believers and encourage them in their faith. I appreciated seeing the MC struggle with her faith. She made a couple choices that were not particularly God honoring, but they weren't blasphemous either. The piece I couldn't accept was the devout father using chance to find a verse and interpreting it out of context to help him make a difficult decision. That is not how my faith works, and it is not how my God speaks to me.

The pace is a bit slow and, like I said, the brilliance is subtle. It took me a while to finish this book, simply because I kept putting it down and doing something else. It didn't grip me by the lapels and scream, "READ ME!"

Overall, it was a delightful read.

Eden says

Young Adult Book: The second of the Abby Lovitt series. For a middle school or upper elementary age student who loves horses, with a little bit of mystery thrown in, this is a good series. Abby is an 8th grader in this book. She has overcome bullying (book 1) and is growing into a better sense of herself as a separate individual from her parents and friends. Her father is a horse trainer/trader and an elder in their fundamentalist church (and I use that term as it was in the 1960's - meaning a small church without a seminary-educated clergy, very rigid, and patriarchal). What is well done here is the degree to which Abby's father actively listens to his wife and daughter. There is much love and concern for each family member in this book. No sex, no drugs, only a mystery built around theft of a horse, and the normal issues that beset a girl in 8th grade. The scene where she and her mother try lox and bagels for the first time made me chuckle. 2019 - bk 24

Tayler says

The book is about a girl named Abby. She owns a ranch and lives with her mom and dad. She has a jumping horse named Black Gorge which she jumps on. Her father has been getting mail from someone who is trying to find a missing horse. He thinks one of the horses they bought is that horse. A connection I have with the character is that we both love horses. Abby reminds me of one of my friends because she tries to get her school work done right away. I have had an experience of when I forgot where to go and my friend just and me follow her just like when Abby forgot where to go and Black Gorge knew.

Happy says

Fun and sweet. Horse facts and training details were correct. Loved the story.

Adrienne Pettinelli says

I listened to this one, and at first I thought I wasn't going to like it, but it really grew on me. I enjoyed the window into a world I know very little about, on a few levels.

Holly Viken says

October book report
A good horse
Jane Smiley

The book A good horse is about a young girl named Abby Lovitt, and she is about to start the eighth grade. Abby lives with her very strict parents on their 26 acre horse ranch in California. The Lovitt families business consists of buying horses at low prices, getting them healthy and in beautiful condition, training them to jump and race, and then selling them for money. Abby knows that she shouldn't get infatuated or too close with the horses because sooner or later they will be sold for a profit. That was until Abby couldn't help herself with a very special horse that she came encounter with, the horse is know as Black George. Black George is beautiful and a gifted jumper. He hurdles over jumps with ease and enthusiasm, and Black George loves doing it also. Abby's father decides to enter his daughter and Black George in a extremely classy horse show. With more high end jumpers, That's when Abby and Black George discover some real competition. Abby's father comes into contact with a wealthy horse buyer and is willing to pay top dollar for Black George. Abby loves riding him and will be sad to see him sold, but she understands. Abbys parents told her to think of it as she knows that training him to his full potential will make him even better. Abby's most favorite horse at the ranch is little Jack, the little orphan. His mom, Brown Jewel, died from colic not long after giving birth to Jack. Since then, Abby has taken over the duty of caring and the training of Jack. A little after that a letter arrives from a private investigator who is working for a rich Texas rancher. A while back, someone had stolen a few of the rancher's prize horses, and the investigator suspects that the Lovitts had purchased one of the stolen horses. If Brown Jewel is proven to be the stolen mare, the owners are going to want to take her bestfriend back to Texas.

The theme of the book that stands out to me most would be to try your hardest at anything you do in life. Abby is a determined and hardworking girl with compassion and a big heart. Abby had to face some huge obstacles throughout the story, including a crippling fear. A crippling Fear is something that most riders come encounter with at some point of getting hurt on or off your horse. Abby knew that if she wanted to continue to ride that she would have to get over her fear of getting hurt and she eventually did. Abby is a very brave and compassionate girl who had many troubles come her way and also had many fearful times, but that didn't make her stop loving and caring for all of the horses who were once hurt or who were most likely going to be sold. Abby made the story not just about the amount of horses being sold or found, she made the story about her love towards the horses. although Abby wasn't allowed the get to emotionally close to the horses, she still had a very special bond with the horses that nobody else at the ranch could even compare to.

Jane Debano says

Loved this book. It's a sequel to "The Georges and the Jewels" and continues the story of Abby Lovitt who lives on a horse ranch in California in the 1960's. She is now 13 and in 8th grade and continues her barn chores as well as daily riding the horses. She's decided to name one of the geldings Black George and he turns out to be a natural jumper. Her parents have decided to ask Jem Jarrow, a man who works with horses in a gentler, more intuitive way, to give her lessons. You might say Jarrow has even gentled her father! Jarrow tells Abby that horses are naturally curious and you can use that curiosity to get them to do the things you want them to do. She and her father take Black George to a big stable on the coast where they get extra training and encouragement. Black George gets entered in some jumping events and Abby has to deal with her own fear of the magic number, 4 ft. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the little colt born on the ranch gets bigger and stronger and Jem advises Abby to put him in with the Geldings, (the Georges) in order to teach him some manners. They receive a letter from an investigative agency who is searching for 4 mares who were in foal and stolen. The thieves abandoned them and it's thought Jack's dam may have been one of those mares. She died shortly after Jack's birth and is buried on the ranch. Unfortunately, she was brown with no special markings, so without a record of her lip tattoo, there is no way to prove she was or was not the thoroughbred dam of Jack. She was a valuable broodmare, covered by the famous stallion Jaipur, so her foal would be expensive. How the story works out is a charming example of Jane Smiley's great use of plot, character and plice.

Parker Burton says

I loved this book because it continued the story of Abby's life with school, friends, family, the ranch, customers and most importantly the horses.

Mackenzie says

This book was okay. It was intended to be about Abby trying not to lose Jack, but the book kind of wandered on about random stuff that didn't really match the plot. I did like how it ended, but I also don't think anyone can just know when they're being conned. Don't get me wrong, you can have a feeling, but you won't immediately know. Anyway, I don't think it was the best book ever, but it was okay.
