



# The Summer of May

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Twelve-year-old May is living in a desolate situation with only her grandmother, who is depressed about the absence of May's mother, and her father, who works long hours and is almost never around. Due to her circumstance and her resentment over having to live in a low-income neighborhood, May often finds herself picking fights and getting into trouble.

But when May is caught graffiti-ing her least favorite teacher's classroom, she is faced with a choice: expulsion or one-on-one summer school with the teacher she most detests. Begrudgingly, May chooses summer school and ultimately learns that her teacher has a secret past--and might just hold the key to answers no one else will give May about her mother.

## **The Summer of May Details**

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Author : Cecilia Galante

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## From Reader Review The Summer of May for online ebook

### Erin says

Great story!

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### Teresa says

I thought this was very strong. It's rare to have a book with a main character who is so angry that she can't get out of her own way. Even as she's making terrible choices, you feel for her. And although this has a teacher who helps her (which is not an unusual character in children's books), Ms. Movado is not without flaws and issues of her own. The picture of a family dealing with anger, depression and a serious health issue is also unusual -- and very well done.

Although this has some plausibility issues, I can almost believe that in such a dysfunctional and secretive family, basic facts would have been unknown to May. If I could take away 1/2 a star for that, I might. Maybe not. The author does a pretty good job of making that work. From the teachers point of view, not so much. I'm mulling that over--it's debatable, and I look forward to using this with a book discussion group.

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### Jessica says

Unlike any of the other middle grade novels that I have ever read, The Summer of May is not a "sunshine and rainbows" kind of book. Quite the opposite really. This is a tough read, filled with real life emotion that cuts down into your heart as you read. I'll be honest when I say that I literally cried while I read this.

May is a 13-year-old girl who wants nothing more than to feel whole again. Navigating the trials of middle school, she tends to use anger as her defense mechanism against anything (or anyone) who she doesn't agree with. She doesn't enjoy the feelings that bubble up inside her and burst to the surface, but it is the one way that she knows how to deal. Angry words help to mask the hurt that she feels inside. This story is a look at how these feelings affect a person, as well as the people around them.

May isn't the only character in this book who is learning something either. Amidst her tumultuous inner battle, Galante sets up other characters who are fighting the same sort of battle. Although they are much older than her, these characters show May that she isn't the only one who doesn't know quite how to deal with how she feels. Each character chooses their own defense mechanism, but they all have the anger and hurt beneath their surface. It isn't until May starts to spend more time with Mrs. Movado that she starts to make progress towards understanding what is inside her.

At the heart of this book is really a message of forgiveness, and of making amends. This is a topic that is so rarely dealt with in tween/teen books, but I wish it was out there more often. As summer wanes on, May learns to look into herself through the use of writing and poetry. She learns to find the things that are buried deep inside her and come to terms with them. Most importantly of all she learns to forgive, and to ask for forgiveness, in an effort to heal herself from the inside out. If you're thinking that this sounds like a topic from a much older story, I would have agreed at one point. However now that I've finished reading this book I'm not sure I can look at middle grade literature the same again.

Excellently written and brimming with honest emotions, *The Summer of May* is one of the most surprising and heartfelt books that I have read this year. I applaud Cecilia Galante for so carefully and sincerely dealing with such a tough topic. This is a book that I will recommend to tweens, teens and even adults a hundred times over. Dealing with the importance of family, the power of words, and the idea of forgiveness, I don't think it matters who is reading this book. Everyone can benefit from the messages between these pages.

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### **Cari Beth says**

I really enjoyed this book, what I loved about it is the relationships. They are all so unique. From May's friendship with Olive to the love-hate relationship she has with Ms. Movado. I also thought the plot was quite interesting, even though it was predictable at times. The only complaint I have with this book is that it ended rather abruptly. I would have really appreciated another chapter or two, or an epilog.

Overall I would recommend this book. I gave it a 4.25 out of 5 stars.

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### **Jennie says**

This book never failed to amaze me. The way the author wrote made me feel like I was there with May, going through her struggles and everything. There are a few moments that made me cry. May goes through a lot of pretty depressing stuff compared to a normal 8th grader. She may not handle things the best, but it really shows the way a real 14 year old thinks. It's very realistic, although you may not relate to May. I rated this book 5 out of 5 stars because it's absolutely phenomenal and filled with a great plot. Overall, it's a great book to read no matter what age you are. You can't help feeling May's emotions and struggles.

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### **Emma says**

*The Summer of May* is about a young 12 year old girl, who is having a hard home life with her father, and grandmother. Her mother has died and she really only has one best friend. And now she has to decide between expulsion from her school, or spending the summer in summer school with her least favorite teacher, who she vandalized the classroom of to get her into this mess in the first place. Her home life is hard because her dad is very distant and hasn't been very kind lately, and her grandma who is still mourning the death of her daughter (May's mother). Basically everyone is still very depressed by losing May's mom, and their home/ family has never been the same since. May is also not doing well in her English class in school, she absolutely hates the teacher, and doesn't care a single bit about the work in that class. So because she feels the teacher has made fun of May, and laughed at her in class when May said the wrong answer, May decides to react by later spraypainting on the teacher's wall her body as a huge avocado, which represents the teacher's nickname that is Movado the avocado. Now because of that she has to do one on one summer school with her. Obviously May is not happy about this at all, and the first few days she is late, and does not show much interest. She is especially angry because Movado the avocado is making her repaint her whole room.

During this whole experience May begins to slowly do her school work, still with some attitude, and starts coming on time to her class. With all this time with Movado, May begins to learn things about her that she would never have thought, Movado starts taking May out for her lessons to start mixing it up and to change the ways she thought before. At first May hates it and it makes her hate it even more, but then she realizes

how good it is for her and how much she is learning from it. But at the same time while things are getting kind of better at summer school, things at home are still home, she is still fighting with her dad, and her grandma is silent in her bedroom. I thought it was interesting that May's best friend was this girl named Olive, who you wouldn't expect to be her friend. I like how Olive is always there for May and supports her with anything, especially the whole summer school issue. I don't think May realized how much Olive did care for a long time, but when she did she realized how much she loved her as a friend and how much she needed her to be there for her.

I loved how Movado began telling May about her childhood, her family, and her childhood best friend. I think my favorite thing about the book is how Movado's childhood ties in with May's mother that she never even knew. I love how May and Movado become closer and closer, and Movado begins to seem like a mother figure I thought at least. There is a lot of exciting things happening towards the end, like May's relationship with Movado changing, her friendship with Olive almost ending, and the biggest fight between May and her father they have had. But my favorite has to be the relationship with May and Movado, they hated each other to begin with, but as they worked together all summer, they began to learn so many things about each other, May about her mom's past, and Movado about what kind of person May is and how she isn't just a tough little girl with a huge attitude. Throughout the book they taught so many things about each other, and May's family became so much closer. All this really was because of summer school, so I believe that summer school was the best thing May could have done.

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## **Kellee says**

Reviewed at: <http://www.teachmentortexts.com/2012/...>

This is one that I will not forget. I think this novel will connect easily with a wide variety of people. First, May feels an anger that many pre-teens and teens probably feel and the way she describes it is the best I've ever read in a book. The feeling of being a tea pot that is boiling is a perfect analogy to rage that is hard to control and unwarranted. Something so small can make you feel so angry and then it gets out of control. In the novel, May works on controlling it and matures so much throughout the novel. It is such a powerful thing to read about.

May's family situation is also unique. Her mother left her and she lives with a father who works too much and often ignores her and with a grandmother who locks herself away ever since her mother left. Many readers will connect with the (lack of) family situation that May has. May also struggles with keeping friends (mostly because of her temper) and that is a tough thing for all preteens and teens. Specifically trying to be and keep a good friend.

It will also connect to all of my teacher friends because of the importance of May's English teacher in the novel. I love that not only does May evolve in the book, but that Miss Movado does too. She has realizations that many of us probably have had during our teaching and is striving to make a difference in a young student's life as we all aim to. You may not like her too much at first, but just as May realizes things about herself, Miss Movado does too. It is another powerful thing to read about.

AND it is a great resource for the language arts or English classroom just as a mentor text for talking about poetry or writing. The book touches on many English class topics such as: Imagery, Personification, "The Raven", "Harlem", Writing, and Poetry.

I will say, like Miss Movado preaches in the book, don't judge a book by its cover. The cover (and description) of this book do not do the book justice. First, May is a 13 year old girl, not 12 as the description

says and not 9 like the cover portrays. Also, she doesn't go on a fire escape to dream and she doesn't have a cat. I think the cover is going to drive away readers who need this book.

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## **Barb Middleton says**

May is in trouble again. Big trouble. She has two options: either be expelled from school or retake English in summer school. She decides on the latter but it is with her least favorite teacher, Movado the Avocado. May is mouthy, resentful, and furious. But she's been furious for the past 18 months so just add it to her already long list of things that make her angry.

She's furious with her mom for leaving them. She's furious at her dad for not being around. She's furious at her grandma for staying in her room all day in bed with the door closed. She's furious with her old friends at school. She's furious with the school principal and English teacher. Mad May is one unhappy girl... When she spray-paints a teachers room for humiliating her, she ends up in serious trouble. She spends it with the teacher who humiliated her in the first place and the two become unlikely friends.

The author captures May's anger really well in her character as she lashes out at everyone. I did think some of the characters were preachy in parts especially Olive who doesn't sound like a teenager but instead an adult counselor telling May how to deal with her feelings. The author has Olive's mom be a counselor so that it looks like Olive's learned from her, but it was too sophisticated for a twelve-year-old. May is a jerk to many people in this book; however, she does show kindness to her grandma who is very fragile and suffering from depression and she has fun with Olive like a typical kid. It's pretty obvious what happened to May's mom and why she is so angry. In that regard, the plot is predictable but the characters help move it along. There are also some improbable things that happen in the plot, such as May remembering her mom as an infant and May's punishment. Also, the reader never really finds out what awful thing May said to Olive when they argued. The plot seemed forced in spots such as when the teacher tells her story and the reader figures out her motivations for teaching May that summer.

There are some deep themes in the book but they are not explored in great depth which makes it okay for younger kids to read. The part where May steals and doesn't know why, except she's so angry and sad, is interesting. Most of the characters are trying to deal with their grief. The author was trying to add tension to the story by hiding the fact that the mom has died but it pretty easy figuring that out right away. Why else would May be that bonkers? I think the beginning would have been stronger if the reader knew that fact up front. The characters drive this book which makes it an enjoyable read.

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## **Emily says**

I panicked last night when I realized the review for this book is due tomorrow. No worries - it was a quick read. There are many layers to this seemingly simple book. Galante's characters are true and believable and that is the best part of the book. Each is distinct and meaningful and each brings something to the story. May is an unhappy 13 year old mourning the departure of her mother. Her best friend, Olive, is a nobody, but she is a true friend to May. May's grandmother is reclusive, barely eating or living, while May's father works nonstop. The one person who may bring May out of her downward spiral is her English teacher. Despite the fact that she can't stand her, May is going to spend her summer with her in summer school. I can't say there were many surprises for me overall. I figured out the ending, but it didn't matter. I liked May a lot and wanted her to be happy. That made me keep reading - well, and the fact that I had to so I could write a

review for Library Media Connection. This is an easy read, but enjoyable for me and pre-teens as well. I do recommend it, but I hope before it is published, the cover is revised. May is a freckle-face Irish girl, not Latino or African-American. I also don't like the name of the book. I think this is an appealing book, but those two things need to be rethought by the publishers.

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### **Vixie says**

In my opinion this book was good but not as good as I wanted/expected it to be. It wasn't as exciting and thrilling, there were many good parts of the book. But I think there should I have been more plot twists to make it more interesting, and to lure in the reader.

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### **kelly Fuller says**

I finished this book a few weeks ago, so I am little late putting this review up. But don't take my hesitation as an indication that I didn't love it.. because I did!

When reviewing a book, lots of people say "I read this book in one night!" or "I just blew through this novel, in a hour!" but the truth is, they skipped through it, skimming the plot. They blow through the book, love it for a few minutes, then quickly forget out it.

I did read The Summer of May in one night. But I didn't just speed through it. It took hours. I took my time, because I really loved the characters. And I didn't just toss it off the side of the bed and forget it. I lay there and wondered about the characters and how their lives continued. I felt a little protective of the main character, as if I were a overbearing aunt.

So, what's so great about it? Well, everything I guess. I should tell you that The Summer of May is a YA novel.. or well ... Pre-YA? I think it's going to be marketed to 9-13 year olds. What category is that? Anyway, it doesn't matter, because a great book is a great book.. I don't care who it's marketed for. I loved it. I plan on passing to my 8 year old daughter next year and I know she will love it too.

All right, so... the synopsis. May is a troubled young girl. She is living in a rough area of town, in a rented shabby apartment with her father and grandmother. Her father is always working, but when he's not, he's picking fights with May over her behavior at school or insolence at home. Her once feisty grandmother spends all day in her bed, staring sadly at old photos and playing solitaire. May is a sad, angry child. She acts out in school, argues with friends and misses her mother immensely. Her mother's whereabouts are not revealed until much later in the book.

After a defiant act of rebellion against her least favorite teacher, May is forced to attend summer school or face expulsion. But she is surprised to find that she is not attending the normal summer school program. Her overly stern English teacher, has other plans for her.

Basically, The Summer of May is a book about closure. I was truly amazed at the amount of depth that this book had. Unfortunately, many books aimed at this age group are "fluff", full of crazy boy crushes and popularity contest dramas. If you want your child to read something with some heart, make sure you pick this book up for her in April. While you're at it, pick one up for yourself.

Cecilia Galante is an immensely talented author. Check our her website for other fantastic novels. And best

of all, she's uber friendly and we are hoping to post an author interview in the near future! In the meantime, go buy her books!!!

\*I required to let you know that I recieved a free e-galley version of this book form Simon and Schuster.

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## **Maxine Mathew says**

Still traumatized by her mother's departure, May tries to tackle her pain and anger by creating ruckus in her school. Unfortunately her latest escapade does not go down too well with Mr. Pringle, her school's principal. As a result, she is forced to attend summer school with her English teacher, Miss Movado- who is not one of May's favorite people. expecting the classes with Miss Movado to be a torture, she is surprised to find herself actually taking interest in her classes. As Miss Movado encourages her to write her feelings in her journal, May slowly comes to terms with her anger and remorse for her mother.

Unlike most tween novels that I have read, The Summer of May is not happy or a sunshiney book. I cried buckets while reading this book. Most books targeting an audience of younger teen deal with first crushes, changing friendships or the school hierarchy. However this is not the case with The Summer Of May. Its plot revolves around dealing with the grief of losing someone close. May lost her mother an year ago and is still refusing to come to terms with her feelings. This cooped up anger has not only spoilt her friendship with her friend, Brittany, but is also causing havoc with her school life. People have their own ways to deal with the loss of their near and dear ones. Some accept the loss calmly and decide to move on with their lives because after all that is what their close ones would have wanted them to do; some refuse to accept the loss; and some like May are filled with suppressed anger at the loss and end up blaming themselves for what has happened. No matter how anyone reacts to such a situation the sadness and a feeling of a gaping hole in their heart refuses to go away for quite a long time. One thing is for sure - their life is not going to be the same after this. This is what is depicted in the book- the changes that come after a dear one's loss and the difficulty in continuing our lives normally . Also, the book highlights the importance of forgiving—not only in the lives of those who are being forgiven, but also in the lives of the people who are forgiving those against whom they have a grudge. After all, it is better to make peace than to remain with that anger in you for the rest of your lives.

As for the characters in the book, the author has not tried to exaggerate or gloss over their emotions. It is because of the genuine emotions felt by the characters that I could connect to them. No one is perfect in this book - everyone has their imperfections. May was a happy and even a popular girl before her mother's departure. Now filled with remorse and guilt, she withdraws into her shell and pushes away the people close to her by saying stuff she never should have said. Sometimes she appears to be self-centered and annoying. Whenever that happened I had to remind myself that she, after all, is just thirteen. Olive is May's only friend who stuck around and helps May cope with her loss. Though she can go a bit overboard with her optimistic quotes, she is a sweet and understanding friend who calmly deals with May's moody nature. May's English teacher too helps her to understand and accept her mother's departure. Miss Movado may come across as a dictator holding her students by a leash, yet as we come to know her we will understand that this is not something she does purposefully. I loved the empathy and companionship that Miss Movado and May form by sharing each other's losses and regrets. There is something in their relationship that strikes as so sweet and unpretentious that truly touches my heart.

The Summer Of May deals with a concept that is rarely written about in a book for younger teens. The Summer Of May is a fresh new book for tweens that teaches the importance of family, spoken words that can hurt or comfort and above all the strength of forgiveness.

Quotes:

Later that evening, waiting for Dad to come home with dinner, I found myself thinking about those cards again. For some reason, I couldn't remember what the Mother's Day card I'd brought for Momma just before she left looked like. I'd brought it from a store; that much I knew. The last time I'd made her card was when I was about eight year old. Back then I made cards for her all the time—even when it was not Mother's Day—drawing the word "Mom" in big, puffy letters and coloring them in with my crayons. Sometimes I'd add bumblebees and butterflies, just to make it pretty. Once I even drew her a giant panda bear holding a heart. But the last Mother's Day card had been from the store. Why couldn't I remember what it said? Or even what it looked like?

"..... Sometimes life deals you a hand that you're not quite sure how to play. But that doesn't mean you step out of the game. You just have to learn a different set of rules. Adjust to different playing field."

She looked so happy. I thought now. She always looked happy when someone caught her unaware, as if for a spilt second, before she had a chance to think about it, the little girl joy that Gram had seen, the cartwheel-happiness that hid somewhere inside of her, peeked its head out again. It was the rest of the time –when she did think, when she spent all the time brooding—that it disappeared. And the rest of the time, unfortunately, had become most of the time.

Overall:

With its warm and heart-felt writing, *The Summer Of May* is a book that you should look out for.

Recommended?

Yes, to all middle graders and teens who are looking for a book which is thoughtful and sentimental.

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## **N J says**

Rating: 4.5

I really, really like this author. Cecilia Galante is remarkable and her novels are amazing. *Hershey Herself* was my favourite novel in fourth grade, so in high school I decided to read more by this author. I like *The Summer of May* even better than *Hershey Herself*. I reread this book once a year.

May is a well developed character you will easily relate with no matter who you are. She's angry at the world and all the people in it because her mother has left. This anger leads her to graffiti her teacher's classroom on the last day of school, leaving her to choose her punishment; either retake English with the evil Miss Movado or get expelled. The novel also follows May's relationships with her best friend Olive who often gives unsolicited advice coined from her life coach mother, her grieving grandma who May has to take care of, and her father who is nearly as angry as she is.

May's emotional journey is what makes the story so moving. In the beginning, she lets her anger blind her and make it nearly impossible to communicate her feelings in a way that's understood. But as she begins to get close with Miss Movado and complete her journal prompts and poetry work, she begins to move through her anger and sadness.

Most of the characters including May, Olive, Miss Movado, and May's father all have clear goals, motivation, and stakes. Gran, on the other hand, felt a little lacking to me. I had trouble determining her goals and stakes and ended the book wanting to know more about her. That's part of the reason I haven't

given 5 stars. The other thing I didn't like was how coincidental the resolution of May's conflict was. She gets into trouble and by random luck gets out of it rather than by action.

The ending of the book was fairly satisfying nonetheless and I enjoyed the "twist", though I expected it even from the first read. I really liked the revelation of where May's mother went (I won't spoil). I thought it was good it was saved for the end because it colours your perception of the book, so you reflect with a different mindset. Overall, this is a great book that I will continue to read over and over again.

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### **Once Upon a Twilight says**

This is a great book for the younger reading audience I say between ages 10-13. Now its MG based but a adult like myself will enjoy it as well. It's definitely a good book to share or pass on to your daughter possibly. This book is a easy read and very cute. The characters are very easy to believe and are not at all complicated. The storyline centers around the main character but the other characters also play important part. This book message to me was about closure, coming to terms with yourself. This is that book that is safe to let your daughter or even son read and you don't have to worry about any inappropriate matters not for that young age.

May is a young troubled girl, she is 13 years old. She lives in not such a great part of town with her Father and Grandmother. May has to deal with her mother's departure and a grandmother who's barely living. Then she has her Father that picks at her when he is not working which is all the time. May's best friend is Olive and they have a good friendship. So May ends up having to attend summer school after being defiant to the teacher she can't stand at her school. May realizes she is not attending your normal summer school program and that that same teacher she can't stand has other plans for her that summer. So would I recommend this book, Yes. The question is will your child like it since it doesn't have your typical girl/boy crushes or school teen drama.

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### **Jill Cd says**

I love how May wasn't easily fixed in this book. Her character was strong, angry, self absorbed, and traumatized. She felt like a real person. A great book for middle school.

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