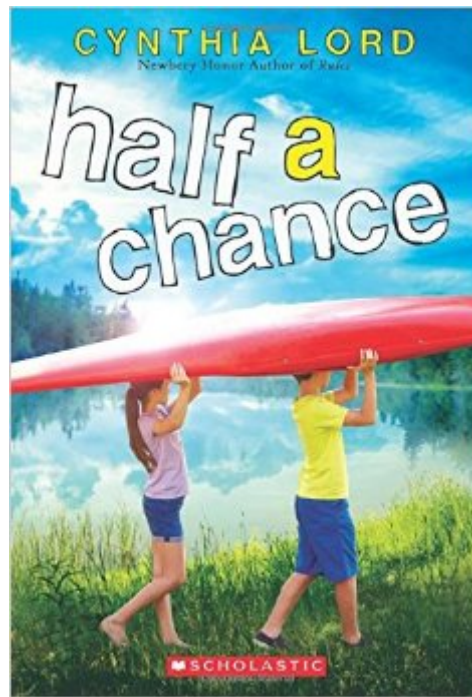


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Half A Chance



Synopsis

A moving middle-grade novel from the Newbery Honor author of *Rules*. When Lucy's family moves to an old house on a lake, Lucy tries to see her new home through her camera's lens, as her father has taught her -- he's a famous photographer, away on a shoot. Will her photos ever meet his high standards? When she discovers that he's judging a photo contest, Lucy decides to enter anonymously. She wants to find out if her eye for photography is really special -- or only good enough. As she seeks out subjects for her photos, Lucy gets to know Nate, the boy next door. But slowly the camera reveals what Nate doesn't want to see: his grandmother's memory is slipping away, and with it much of what he cherishes about his summers on the lake. This summer, Nate will learn about the power of art to show truth. And Lucy will learn how beauty can change lives...including her own.

Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Scholastic Press; Reprint edition (May 10, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0545035341

ISBN-13: 978-0545035347

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.7 x 7.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (51 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #6,669 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #21 in Â Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Multigenerational #33 in Â Books > Children's Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Art #47 in Â Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > New Experiences

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Cynthia Lord was awarded a Newbery Honor for her 2008 title *Rules*. I haven't read *Rules*, but having seen what she can do with *Half a Chance*, it's easy to see why Lord was given such a prestigious distinction. Indeed, *Half a Chance* is a gem of a book. Its lake setting becomes a character unto itself. And Lucy recognizes how the lake can feel different depending on one's mood: "On a gray, calm day the lake becomes a mirror, reflecting other things... It matched how I felt.

Upside down and not really myself." Lord's gift for simultaneously capturing the voice of young Lucy while imparting her with wisdom is uncanny. Lucy is endearingly normal and, like any girl, has insecurities. I love this line which perfectly communicates the discomfort a shy girl feels trying to fit in with new people: "It's horrible and itchy to stand in someone else's living room when you don't know everyone, but they all know each other." Lucy has moved around a lot, so she's searching for approval from her peers. But she also craves love and respect from her famous photographer father. She struggles to deal with his frequent travels and the difficulty of trying to talk to him while he's on location: "How could I want to talk to him so much and then feel worse when I finally did?" Half a Chance uses photography to frame Lucy's summer adventures and demonstrate her creativity. Readers will likely want to try their own hand at taking pictures! Lucy and her new friend Nate have some genuinely thoughtful and moving conversations, sharing their wish to hold on to the happy moments even, or especially, when life is topsy-turvy: "It's too bad you can't make everything exactly the way you want and then freeze it to stay that way." Lucy eventually learns how to experience life rather than trying to capture it all on film. And she learns many valuable things about herself and others. Lord expertly weaves in themes like friendship, honesty, trust, jealousy and insecurity, aging and loss, and forgiveness. The tenuous nature of life is examined from several different angles. Kids will learn about life and loons. And with the book's focus on nature and wildlife conservation, they will likely develop a greater awareness and appreciation for all forms of life. Quotables are many and memorable, as are the takeaways to be gleaned from them: Discernment: "When two things matter, how do you know which one matters more?" Gratitude: "Good things matter, even when they don't last forever." Integrity: "You can't do the wrong thing, even for the right reasons." Perseverance: "Sometimes people are like shooting photos. It takes a bunch of misses before something good happens." Hope: "Sometimes you don't get an answer, though. Sometimes 'I hope so' is the only answer you get." Verdict: 4.5 stars of 5. Heartily Recommended! Half a Chance would make a quality summer read for an introspective, creative type. There is enough thought and nuance that parents might enjoy reading along and discussing the philosophical moments with their child. With its slower-moving plot, Half a Chance is not for reluctant readers, but kids who appreciate stories like Jeanne Birdsall's *The Penderwicks* or Deborah Wiles' *Each Little Bird That Sings* will feel at home on the lake with Lucy of the Loons, and they'll be richly rewarded for their time and effort! *A review copy was provided to me by the publisher, Scholastic Press*

Lucy's dad is a famous photographer who has trouble staying in one place. He's often off on an

assignment for weeks or months at a time. This summer, the family has moved to a cottage on a New Hampshire lake, just before Dad heads off for a two month photo shoot in Arizona. Lucy wishes he'd be around more, but wishes even more that he would pay attention to her. When Dad mentions that he will be judging a photo contest for kids when he returns, she decides that entering under another name will finally get her an honest Dad opinion about her own skill with a camera. After she meets Nate and his sister who are spending the summer along with their family at the camp next door, Lucy shares her desire to win the contest with Nate. As they start getting to know each other, Lucy becomes involved in the annual Loon Patrol, a daily check on the pair of loons nesting on a small island in the lake. Nate's grandmother, Lilah, has been involved in the Loon Patrol for years, but her knees and impending dementia, make it impossible for her to do the things she's done every summer, most of them with Nate and his sister Emily. Watching loons, playing with her grandchildren and climbing nearby mountains have kept her life meaningful, but now she's becoming more forgetful and frightened. The contest consists of a list of words and phrases like Your Name, Skip, Collection, Sticky, Left Behind, Wonder, Hope, etc. Contestants are challenged to take a photograph that best conveys a visual meaning of each word or phrase. As Lucy's summer progresses, she learns how to deal with other people, particularly Megan who has been Nate's summer friend for years and resents her intrusion. She also learns to negotiate being friends with a boy, confront her fears about not being good enough as a photographer and how she feels about the loons and their two baby chicks, not to mention understanding Lilah's illness and how it affects Nate. Cynthia Lord packs an amazing amount into this book. Tween and teen readers as well as caring parents and teachers will find themselves carried along as Lucy learns to trust herself, understand how to take into consideration the things others in her life really care about, how sometimes life and nature aren't fair and how sometimes the best decisions are the most difficult to make. This is a wonderful book and should find plenty of eager readers in both public and school libraries.

Somewhere in my forty-year-old self there is still that sixth grade girl I used to be - the one who loves reading realistic fiction novels with characters I could relate to. *Half a Chance* is Cynthia Lord's latest book geared toward middle grade readers. Lucy and her parents move to a home in a small tourist town in New Hampshire. Lucy is worried about making friends and fitting in, and is happy to have a neighbor, Nate, who she becomes friends with quickly. The two spend much of the summer working on taking pictures for a photography contest Lucy is entering. Her father is a famous photographer and Lucy tries hard to measure up to her father's high standards. However, her father is the judge of

the photography contest, and entering the pictures in her own name won't work. Lucy enjoys hanging out with Nate and learning more about the loons from his grandmother. Yet, the two are at odds over a photograph Lucy took of Nate's grandmother, Lilah, who is suffering from dementia. It is easy to see from the picture that Lilah is confused, something that Nate and his parents are trying to coming to terms with. Lord's latest novel is another excellent realistic fiction novel. She is able to capture the thoughts and feelings of those tween years and create real and interesting characters and stories. My oldest daughters (ages 10 and 12) are both clamoring to read this book, which I was excited to pass on to them.

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