



My One Hundred Adventures

Polly Horvath

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THE WINNER OF a National Book Award, a Newbery Honor, and countless other awards has written her richest, most spirited book yet, filled with characters that readers will love, and never forget.

Jane is 12 years old, and she is *ready* for adventures, to move beyond the world of her siblings and single mother and their house by the sea, and step into the “know-not what.” And, over the summer, adventures do seem to find Jane, whether it’s a thrilling ride in a hot-air balloon, the appearances of a slew of possible fathers, or a weird new friendship with a preacher and psychic wannabe. Most important, there’s Jane’s discovery of what lies at the heart of all great adventures: that it’s not what happens *to* you that matters, but what you learn about yourself.

And don't miss Polly Horvath's *Northward to the Moon*, the sequel to *My One Hundred Adventures*.

From the Hardcover edition.

My One Hundred Adventures Details

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BookKids says

Jane loves her life, but she finds it just a tad predictable. She is now 12 years old and feels that she is ready for some good old-fashioned adventures. And of course, when you are ready for adventure, that seems to be when they start finding you. Jane's unconventional yet predictable life starts being a whole lot less predictable. There's the ride in the accidentally hi-jacked hot air balloon and its consequences. There are several men from her mother's past that may or may not be her father. And finally there's the wanna-be psychic preacher friend who is the biggest trouble of all.

Of course, although written as a series of adventure vignettes, Jane's biggest adventure is learning about herself. This sweet, quiet, well-written tale is a welcome relief to the more action packed adventure books out there. Although it probably wouldn't appeal to action-oriented boys as much (Jane's adventures don't involve treasure, kidnapping, or blowing anything up) as girls, it still is a great read for anyone over the age of 10. A generally calm read (there are a few tense scenes, but they are rare), this book is great for rainy day reading.

Jamie says

Putting this on the 12-14 shelf was a bit of a struggle. Because the book uses language and concepts that I found were very adult, such as when the 12-year old protagonist is suddenly crucially aware of the passage of time, and that things will never be the same. Not that 12 year olds might not notice this, but not in the way the author conveyed. Also, the mother has several children by many different fathers - again, I'm not a prude, but it's so subtle but filled with subtext - I enjoyed the book, but it's tough to determine who might be the audience.

Rachael says

Very mild spoiler-- nothing huge!

So I was *supposed to be* reading Dracula, but I couldn't resist setting that aside to read Polly Horvath's latest. Her books are so full of humor and quirky characters, and are surely more joyful to read than dark tales of vampires. My One Hundred Adventures is no exception.

Jane Fielding is the oldest child of her poet single mother. She loves her life on the Massachusetts coast, but feels a longing for something more so she prays for one hundred adventures. The book chronicles her first 14 interesting events, and some of them are quite amazing, many are funny. I really love Horvath's writing, and there are several wonderful passages that I could read over and over. A number of Jane's adventures relate to the secret past of Jane's mother, who is sort of an interesting, mysterious character who has evidently had

several romances without the children ever knowing, or caring too much, who their father is. I found that rather strange, but appreciated the totally clean way in which the subject matter is handled.

My one personal complaint about the book deals with the ending. Throughout the book, Jane is trying to figure out how prayer and miracles work, but is mostly very poorly guided by the local minister who is far more concerned with mysticism and channelers than actual Christian doctrine. Because Nellie, the minister, is basically a quack, Jane ends with a lot more doubts than she started with and I was unsure what her point about faith actually was by the end.

I would be curious to discuss this book with others and see what they thought.

Brooke Shirts says

A sweet, lyrical summertime storybook.

Jane, her three siblings, and her mother live an idyllic life on the beach, but she's starting to feel restless. At the beginning of summer, she decides she's ready for adventures -- one hundred of them -- and sets out to make them happen. Along the way are the usual Horvath cast of eccentric characters and surreal plot twists, from a minister who thinks herself psychic, to the horrible Gourd children, to the simultaneous arrival of all of her mother's ex-boyfriends. When the summer concludes, Jane realizes that adventures aren't something you seek out -- they happen whether you want them or not. What you need to do is learn to enjoy the ride.

This book is excellent, but I didn't enjoy it as much as Horvath's other books, notably because it isn't as laugh-out-loud funny as the others (especially *The Trolls*). I also had difficulty at the beginning of the book pinning down the time period (with references to home-canning food, I initially thought it was set in the 1950s. But no, it's contemporary).

My other main quibble is this: Jane's mother is revealed to be a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, and yet we never -- ever -- see her do much besides childcare and jam-making. How unfair is that?

Jane says

This book was so lovely I wanted to create a special shelf for it. Poetic, funny, charming. It reminded me of Criss Cross in that it perfectly captured what it is like just before puberty.

Toby says

Newbery committees have been accused of being humorless, or at least of discriminating against funny books when selecting the most distinguished children's book of the year. Like Polly Horvath's Newbery-honor book, *Everything on a Waffle*, *My One Hundred Adventures* is funny but also immerses readers into a specific time and place. The place is within shouting distance of the ocean, which may or may not be familiar to readers. But the time, early adolescence, is a time we all remember for "wanting something more...something I-know-not-what, which is what adventures are about."

Beyond the constant presence of the sea, time is measured in this book in berries, with the passing of summer proceeding as jam jars are filled with first strawberries, then raspberries, blueberries, and blackberries. Summer itself is welcomed as "...the moon gently pulls back the layers of the year, leaving the best part open and free. So summer comes to me," and how we yearn for it here in frigid Chicago!

Jane, oldest of four children who live in a cabin by the sea with their unconventional mom, falls into unlikely adventures with quirky characters. We come to know them through evocative images, for example, "...I felt so much like a candle on a cake ready to be lit", which is as good a description of being twelve as I've ever read. Fourteen adventures are completed over the course of the novel, but of course Jane still has her whole life for the other 86. By the end, she has given up childhood's magical thinking and grown into life-affirming wisdom.

I really liked this book and think it incorporates the characteristics of the best Newbery books, that is, child-friendliness and appeal on more than one level, humor but also a dimension of wisdom. I wish it the best of luck tomorrow.

Allison says

Sigh! Frankly, this book bored me. The lyrical prose drew me in at first, and I wanted to love it, but after a few chapters, the story failed to grab me. I regret to admit that I skimmed the last half of the book.

Monica Edinger says

A variation of this review is at my blog here.

This is a lovely book. I became a Horvath fan years ago with *The Trolls* and quite liked *Everything on a Waffle*. This one has the same episodic quality of these and feels a bit gentler too, somehow. It takes place in an unnamed Massachusetts town where the narrator, 12 year-old Jane, lives with her poet mother and younger siblings in a beach house. It is indeed a series of "adventures" that have a number of connecting threads (family, fathers, friendship, and more). There is a charm about this book and I recommend it highly.

Horvath always has a dry, deadpan humorous style that I've always loved. For example, in this book, at one point Jane mentions that her mother has a large stockpile of rice and there are other references to the fact that money and food are a bit scarce in their household. In a later chapter they are sitting about mourning the death of another character and that rice is elegantly referenced thus:

We don't feel much like having a barbecue now. We sit around and eat a little rice.

(And again a few paragraphs later when someone stops by to discuss the funeral.)

"Of course we will be there. We will all be there," says my mother and then offers Mrs. Merriweather a little rice, but she cannot stay. She has other arrangements to make.

There is something in this book that lingers with you. At least it sure is lingering with me.

Kermit says

I listened to this book on my iPod. It was on the School Library Journal list of best books for youth for 2008. I'm not sure if this is young adult or juvenile fiction.

Jane Fielding, the star of the book, is 12 years old. She lives in a beautiful beach town in Massachusetts with her poet mother and her 3 siblings. Jane has deep thoughts. I don't know any 12-year-olds like Jane.

Sometimes her thoughts are downright lyrical. But she is incredibly naive about life. Until the summer she is 12, had she never wondered about the idea of having a father? And it's just annoying that all 4 of the children in that family have different fathers, and no one seems to wonder about how that mom conceived those kids. Just because the mom takes good care of her children and makes a lot of homemade jam doesn't mean that she is a responsible adult. She is portrayed as kind and caring and a model mother. It never mentions how old Jane's younger siblings are--but it kind of seems like they're about 8, 6, and 4. Somewhere before the events of the book began, and when Jane's mom would have been pregnant with the now-4-year-old---did Jane ever wonder or question about where a father might be? It's all treated so casually that this mom just happens to produce babies as a result of her liaisons with men that she doesn't talk about and who are not part of her life or her children's life. She just has 4 children from 4 different men and it's no big deal. Sheesh.

And all the stuff about the transparent poodle was just tedious rather than amusing. To me, almost everything in the book that was supposed to be quirky or funny was just tedious.

Nimmy says

I have read several other books by Polly Horvath (Everything on a Waffle and the Peppins and Their Problems being my favorites) so I was very excited to hear about her new book "My One Hundred Adventures" as it looked interesting as it is about a girl named Jane and her adventures. I really tried to like this book, In fact I did at first but then Nellie (the preacher) and the Gourds (who blackmail Jane into babysitting their very hard to handle children) show up and really got on my nerves, I felt like screaming at Jane for being in my opinion dumb i.e. when Nellie gets her into a stolen air balloon to drop bibles to people way out in the country and she just does it even though she doesn't want to! Personally I think she should have tried to land the balloon. (she manages to later on) But the fact that she thought Nellie was her friend (it later turns out she isn't) I felt it was very obvious she wasn't really and just wanted help delivering bibles. As for the Gourds it turns out that they were blackmailing her for something she didn't even do! Mrs. Gourd claims that one of the bibles Jane drops out of the basket hit one of her babies on the head and may have caused permanent damage. However that turns out to be untrue. In conclusion I extremely disliked this book especially since I stayed up late to finish it in the hopes that it improved. It didn't

Lynn says

Twelve-year-old Jane is at that tender place we call adolescence, leaving childhood behind, yearning and aching for something she can't yet define. "As if itching and outgrown, my soul is twisting about my body wanting something more to do this summer than the usual wading in shallows and reading and building castles on the shore. I want something I know not what, which is what adventures are about." Jane wishes for adventures and when they come, fourteen of them, they form Jane's first steps away from her family and the place she loves.

I am an avowed Horvath fan but even taking that into account, I think this is a really outstanding book and it pops right up there on my list of potential Newberys. She captures just perfectly that tremulous age of wanting something yet not knowing what nor understanding why. The writing is lyrical, not only of the emotions but also the setting which is vividly realized. The trademark quirky characters are at once unique and universal and their encounters with Jane enable her start the biggest adventure of all - knowing herself. This is a delicious book that deserves to be read again and again.

Eva Mitnick says

Life is messy and unpredictable. Folks don't always act the way they should – even grown-ups! Even parents! Unpleasant feelings tend to well up and pervade one's mind like a miasma. But there is unexpected joy in life as well, often in the simplest things and during the oddest moments. Polly Horvath understands this.

12-year-old Jane is the oldest of four children. She lives with her single mom and her two brothers and one sister in a worn but beloved house on the beach, where her mom is apparently able to make a small living from writing poetry – she received a Pulitzer.

This summer, Jane inadvertently becomes the sidekick for Nellie Phipps, the preacher at church, with whom she goes around giving away bibles and searching for spiritual truth in some rather dubious places. A short trip in an air balloon during which Jane drops bibles from midair leads to a stint doing slave labor babysitting for a huge family of tiny messy children. Meanwhile, men keep appearing out of the blue, all of whom seem to have been her mother's boyfriends at one time or another – whether they still are is hard to tell. Finally, there are old women with amazing hats and various illnesses, who must be prayed for and coddled. Thank goodness for Jane's friend Ginny, who has a level head on her shoulders and a steady bead on her future as a fashion designer.

Jane tries to do the right thing and think the best of the people she meets – until she realizes that there is a reason that she keeps having negative, bitter thoughts and it's not because she's a bad person. These folks – Nellie Phipps and quite a few others – are behaving badly! They are taking advantage, being selfish, lying, and in general not being sterling examples of goodness.

These characters are delicious to find in a children's book. Nellie Phipps, single-minded and outrageously self-centered despite her role as minister, rings absolutely true. How does a kid deal with someone like this? Probably a lot like Jane, who keeps hoping that Nellie (being a grown-up and a minister) has Jane's and everyone else's best interests at hear.

A character with a bit part, Dr. Callahan as the town's long-suffering doctor is priceless. He just wants a bit of peace, but he has to deal with all the old ladies and their ailments. At the funeral of one such old lady, Mrs. Parks, Dr. Callahan tries in vain to tell everyone that she had bursitis, not the thrombosis Mrs. Parks had complained of. Finally, he snaps, "I'm telling you, she was in the PINK of health. And that's what I told her. The pink. The silly fool wanted to go into the hospital... It is my opinion that you send one old lady to the hospital and they all want to go." This understandably leads to some heated (and hilarious) discussion, quite disrupting the funeral.

Jane's mom is a bit of an enigma. She avoids most people and hates making public appearances, tending rather to float through life, tending to her children and making jam. That all these men suddenly return to her

life this one summer is somewhat of an unconvincing coincidence – who are they and why did they all come back? Are any of them the fathers of Jane or the other kids? Which ones? Does it matter? I would think it does matter, and yet Jane eventually makes a conscious decision to not bring it up with either her mother or the one man who sticks around. (Another man suddenly runs off to marry a student, a third man apparently drowns – or does he? Another mystery, and a fourth lives a quiet life reading in his trailer).

There is so much to this deceptively simple book – I could go on and on about the various intriguing plot lines and characters. To summarize my favorite thing about the book – the messiness and strangeness of life can lead to important insights that flit through your thoughts and then vanish, altering your perception of the world forever. My library copy is bristling with post-its that I'll have to pull off before I return it, so here is just one tiny example:

“But Mrs. Merriweather probably wouldn’t understand this. She was busy at her sister’s bringing berries. She has had another sort of day and will never know ours. Suddenly I realize that everyone in the whole world is, at the end of a day, staring at a dusky horizon, owner of a day that no one else will ever know. I see all those millions of different days crowded into the one.”

This is my favorite book of 2008, I think.

Gr. 4 - 7

Whitney says

I had a hard time with this book. As with many books by Polly Horvath, it was hit and miss. On the one hand the story was very engaging. I loved the older female characters in the book, they were eccentric and vivid. On the other hand, the 12 year old narrator did not sound or feel 12 years old. I might have been more satisfied had Horvath chosen a 3rd person narration. The voice was very old, definitely adult. The effect, for me, was to make the intentional gaps in the girl's comprehension of what was going on, seem more like stupidity and less like childhood inexperience. Had the voice been younger these gaps would have reconciled. As it is, I had to keep reminding myself she was only 12.

The Library Lady says

My nine year old saw this book, picked it up to read it, and abandoned it after a chapter or so. And I get why.

Horvath writes beautifully. Adult readers--and Newbery committee types--adore her for that. And she writes wonderful, quirky characters and interesting plot twists which make books like Everything On A Waffle fun and readable for kids who don't give a durn about how many (ahem)librarians or teachers adore a book. They just want something they'll LIKE.

She doesn't succeed with the second part here. As someone said, this is more of a book about childhood written for adults than a book about childhood for children. Some of the plot twists go beyond eccentric to beyond belief. There are too many things going on below the surface that an adult may grasp but a child,

looking at the world with a child's eyes will just not get, and so they may feel that something's been left out.

I'm not saying that you can't write a book for kids that has something for grownups to it--heck, that's my whole theory of a great kids book in a nutshell. But this one just doesn't qualify as a great book either for kids or adults.

Megan says

The language in this book is wonderful. It is lyrical and soft, almost old-fashioned despite a few references to the modern day, and the reader is treated with intelligence. We follow twelve-year-old Jane through her summer, a summer of growth, change and education, as she realizes that the simple life she has till now lived, in a small house on the beach, is more complicated than she could have imagined. She does indeed have adventures, which are complicated by the strong characters in the book. People move in and out of her life in the dreamy way that children experience, and like many children she often feels powerless, as though she has to take on all of life's worries by herself.

I had a whole paragraph here about my thoughts on Jane's mother, who is a caring but somewhat flighty character, who has four children with four different fathers. In looking it over, I realized that Horvath was likely trying to get feelings such as mine aroused in her readers. There aren't easy answers and life isn't simple in this book. Questions arise that aren't answered, and people behave in ways that others might find irrational. It is, I think, one of the strengths of this book.

The one qualm I had with the book was that Jane didn't feel like a twelve year old. I could have attributed this to the book being Jane's memories of her twelve-year-old summer, but it's written in present-tense. Jane certainly seemed wise and knowing beyond her years, which clashed with the typically childlike assumptions and decisions she made in the course of the book.
