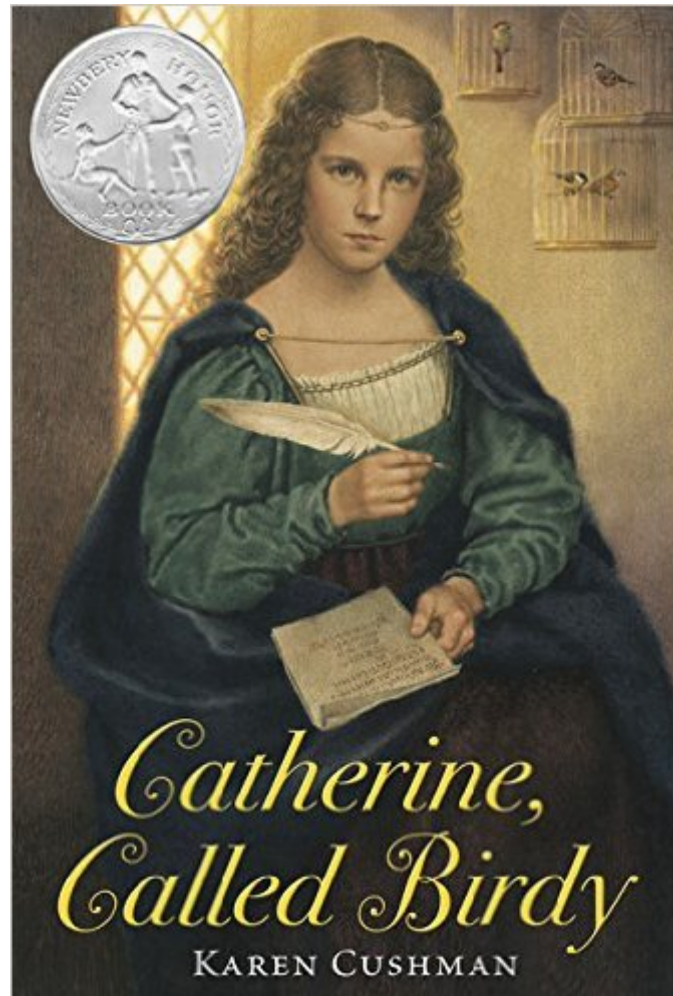


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Catherine, Called Birdy



Synopsis

Catherine, a spirited and inquisitive young woman of good family, narrates in diary form the story of her fourteenth year—the year 1290. A Newbery Honor Book.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 1170 (What's this?)

Paperback: 176 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (June 19, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0547722184

ISBN-13: 978-0547722184

Product Dimensions: 0.5 x 5.2 x 7.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (404 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #18,259 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #14 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Medieval #23 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Europe #180 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Girls & Women

Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

Customer Reviews

"You are lucky, Little Bird, for you have wings. But you must learn to master them. Look at the baron's hawk there on her perch. Just because she doesn't flap her wings all the time doesn't mean she can't fly." Catherine, also called Birdy, is a 14 year old girl from England (the year is 1290). Her brother Edward insists on her writing an account of her days to help her grow "less childish and more learned." So she does, reluctantly at first, her first entry being: 12th Day of September I am commanded to write an account of my days: I am bit by fleas and plagued by my family. That is all here is to say. Catherine is "the daughter of a country knight with but ten servants, seventy villagers, no minstrel, and acres of unhemmed linen." Her mother wants to make her a fine lady who keeps her eyes down and her mouth shut. And her father is determined to wed her to an honorable, wealthy suitor to improve on their family status. Catherine won't let none of this happen to her: she is witty and strong-minded, looking with a critical eye upon the world around her. The only problem is, that nobody but the caged birds in her chamber would share her outlook on life. But she doesn't

give up: from now on much of Birdy's energy is consumed by avoiding the various suitors her father has lined up for her marriage. One by one, they are all sent packing, thanks to Catherine's determination. Until she is almost wed to an older, unattractive man she refers to as Shaggy Beard. Should she run away or join the Crusades? Catherine has to go a full circle, get lost in her emotions and feelings, and find the answer for herself.

Arbitrators of historical accuracy in works of fiction decried "Catherine Called Birdy" as a travesty when it first came out. They said it was inaccurate and filled with factual misrepresentations. They said the main character could not and would not have acted the way she did (Birdy is both headstrong and willful) not because she wasn't capable of it but because of the times in which she lived (Medieval England). I was very partial to "Catherine Called Birdy" when I read it. I thought it was a breezy romp through a time entirely different from our own today. I thought the plot was enjoyable, the main character likable, and the setting fascinating. But yes, if pressed, I would admit that this is definitely not the book you're going to want to read to if you want a realistic portrayal of the Middle Ages. So there it is. Lady Catherine (called Birdy) is the fourteen-year-old daughter of a knight and lady of a manor. Their only daughter, she is expected to wed soon, thereby bringing in a significant price from her suitor. Birdy, however, has other ideas. She knows that in terms of some people (barons, kings, etc.) her family is not particularly rich, but she also feels that no money in the world would be worth her marriage to some empty headed blockhead. As such, the book follows the day-to-day activities of a young lady in jolly old England as she outsmarts and drives away a variety of different potential husbands. To do so, the tale is told through Birdy's journal entries, usually beginning with a note as to what the saint day it is and how they died. The book really hits its stride when Birdy finds herself engaged to a man that repulses and disgusts her more than any other she's met thus far.

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