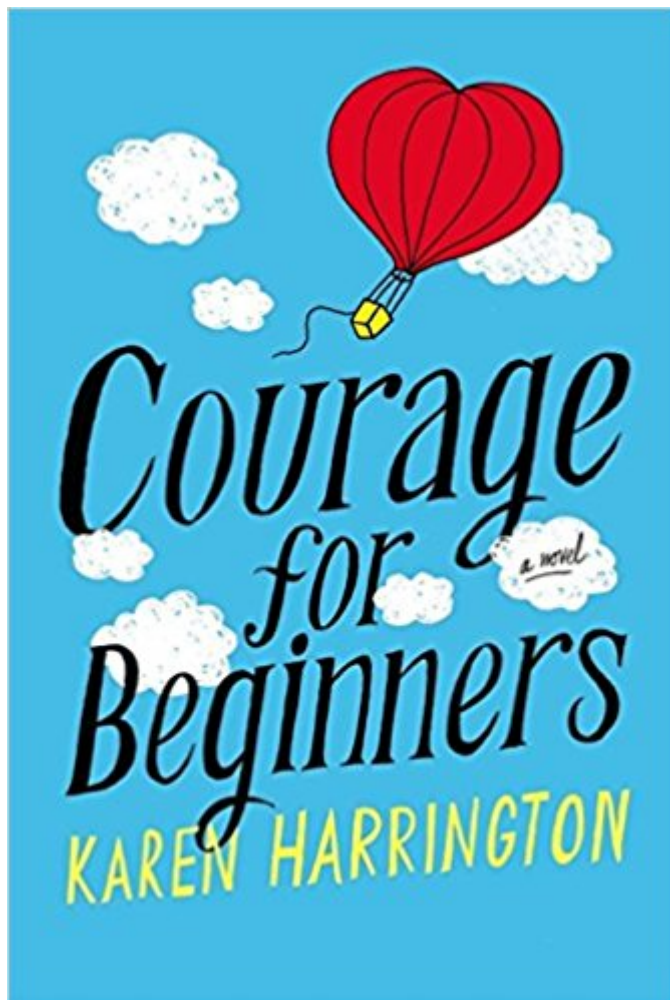


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Courage For Beginners



Synopsis

Twelve-year-old Mysti Murphy wishes she were a character in a book. If her life were fictional, she'd magically know how to deal with the fact that her best friend, Anibal Gomez, has abandoned her in favor of being a "hipster." She'd be able to take care of everyone when her dad has to spend time in the hospital. And she'd certainly be able to change her family's secret. Seventh grade is not turning out the way Mysti had planned. With the help of a hot-hair balloon, her new friend Rama Khan--and maybe even the heroes of the Texas Revolution--can she find the courage to change?

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 13 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Gr 5-8 •As Mysti begins seventh grade, her father is in the hospital, leaving her at home with her younger sister, her severely agoraphobic mother, and no strategy for replenishing the food supplies. To make matters worse, her only friend, Anibal Gomez, asks her to help with his social experiment to be cool, meaning that if she talks to him at school, he'll ruthlessly make fun of her. Mysti struggles with so much change, but as she befriends sassy and supportive Rama, she slowly finds her own voice and agency. Readers will empathize with Mysti, feeling her loneliness as keenly as her triumphs. Harrington's characters are strong and real with one disappointing exception: Rama's mother, identified solely by her extreme fear that Western culture will compromise her daughter's Islamic faith, is a one-dimensional stereotype amid a cast of tenderly

nuanced characters. This otherwise strong realistic novel shows that change is coming for everyone, but they can find the courage within themselves to make the best of it. A solid addition for most middle-grade collections. —Amy Koester, St. Charles City-County Library District, Wentzville, MO --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Starred Review For Mysti Murphy, being in seventh grade takes enormous courage. Her agoraphobic mother never leaves the house; her father falls from a tree and is hospitalized in a comatose state; and her best and only friend is —conducting a social experiment, — ignoring and even making fun of her at school. In this moving follow-up to *Sure Signs of Crazy* (2013), Harrington returns to similar themes and introduces another appealing protagonist, the red-haired, joke-telling Mysti. From her father, Mysti has learned to deflect difficulties with humor, but from her mother, she has learned fears —for instance, it takes Mysti more than a month to think of solving the family's food problem by walking to a nearby store. Mysti often sees herself as a character in a book, and such thoughts are italicized to create a scene-setting narration: —“Here is a girl who may have more hidden genius than she realized. — The heat of the Texas setting and the inevitable bullying and jockeying for social position in her middle school add to the oppressive atmosphere. Scarf-wearing Rama Khan, a neighbor and new friend, provides welcome support, as does her teacher of Texas history. A wrenching and rewarding read. Grades 5-8. —Kathleen Isaacs --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Super book, I thought it was going to be juvenile. I am a 7th reading teacher, so I read lots of YA books. This was a great story. Well-written and a terrific protagonist dealing with a sensitive topic.

Happy with purchase. Prompt delivery and product is as described.

This book was really good. There was no main action just small pieces. I would recommend to all my friends!

Good read for kids who need a little encouragement in life

Good book

It was one of the best books I have ever read! It had a great ending to it Grace Diskin

Really amazing book. Heart warming

Here is a novel you're going to love if you're a fan of characters who seem so real they almost jump out of the pages. Twelve-year-old Mysti Murphy lives and breathes stories. She imagines herself as a character in a novel and makes up interesting tales to embellish the boring parts of her life. Maybe Mysti's wild imagination has something to do with her bed, which for most of her life has been propped up in one corner with a stack of books. The stories, she believes, seep into her mind every night while she sleeps. Or maybe her imagination has something to do with the fact that Mysti's mom never leaves the house, so Mysti can't do things most other kids take for granted, like go out to a restaurant with her whole family. Little does she realize her life is about to get much more complicated than not being able to go to a restaurant. One thing Mysti really doesn't like is change. To her, change is "a big, flat-footed monster creeping through the streets in the night." By the time she's ready to start seventh grade, however, all kinds of changes meet Mysti head-on. Her best friend Anibal announces that he wants to try a "social experiment," which means he's going to stop hanging out with her so he can become a hipster and get a girl to like him. Mysti's dad has an accident and ends up in the hospital, which means now there is no one at home who can drive to the store for important necessities like food. And because Anibal no longer talks to her in public, Mysti has to reboot her social life, which means she has to start all over again on Loser Island, the table in the school cafeteria where "dreams of popularity go to die." Fortunately, despite having a gap between her teeth that she doesn't like and an annoying little sister who practices eyebrow-raising for a hobby, Mysti has a lot going for her. Not only is she a good storyteller, but also she has a fantastic sense of humor, like her joke-loving dad. She can rattle off a joke a day and makes hilarious observations that chase the gloom behind the clouds. She sees the world in the vivid colors her mom uses to paint murals, like Indigo Blue, Burnt Sienna, and Lemon Yellow. And she is determined to fulfill her dream someday of going to Paris. Take these ingredients, add some new friends, observations from Animal Planet and Judge Judy, a lesson from Texas History about what it means to be a true hero, and a little courage, and Mysti just might have what it takes to make her own positive change instead of waiting for change to creep up on her. Here is a truly magnificent story of a girl whose inspiring example reminds me that life is not what happens to you,

but what you do with what happens to you. It's a new favorite I will read again and again, and it will sit on my bookshelf next to another favorite of mine, author Karen Harrington's first middle-grade novel "Sure Signs of Crazy," where I like to imagine the two main characters will share their lunches and become best friends.

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