



Shoeshine Girl

Clyde Robert Bulla

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Who ever heard of a shoeshine girl?

The last thing Sarah Ida wants to do is spend the summer with her Aunt Claudia. But when her parents send her away because of problems at home, that is exactly what she has to do. With no allowance and no fun to be had, Sarah Ida decides to look for a job. But who will hire a ten year old? Al, the shoeshine man, will!

Sarah loves her job, even if it means getting knee-deep in shoe polish everyday. Then something terrible happens and it looks like the shoeshine stand will have to close forever. If Sarah Ida wants to keep it open, she'll have to learn a few lessons about growing up along the way ...

Shoeshine Girl Details

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Author : Clyde Robert Bulla

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From Reader Review Shoeshine Girl for online ebook

Jodi says

My daughter was put off by the main character's terrible attitude; Sarah Ida was really bratty and rude in the beginning. Natalie pleaded with me to not have to finish the book, and I agreed, but finished it for myself.

It's the story of a little girl with a chip on her shoulder, who's angry at the world and out to get what she wants. She undergoes a gradual transformation as she befriends an elderly shoe-shiner and learns to care for someone besides herself. It had a good ending, though rather unsatisfying. There was a lot of disrespect towards adults in this story, with no real reconciliation toward those with whom Sarah Ida felt alienated. If there had been a sequel telling the story of her return home and healing her relationship with her parents, it would have made this book better as a whole. Just knowing that there's no resolution of these issues leaves me to conclude that this book is not really worth it. Skip this one for something better.

Lindz says

Sarah Ida has just been sent to spend the summer at her Aunt Claudia's house. Everyone is against her since her friend was caught shoplifting. She's not allowed an allowance because she had spent all her pocket money at home, and she gets in trouble when she convinces her new friend to give her all her savings. Infuriated, she starts working for Al shining shoes, thinking her aunt will feel bad that her niece has been reduced to shining shoes in order to get pocket money. Instead to her surprise her aunt thinks it's a good idea. When Al is hit by a car while crossing the street, Sarah Ida suddenly finds herself rising to the challenge - can she keep his business open to help support him while he's in the hospital?

It seemed a tiny bit preachy when I read it the second time, but when I was a kid I really liked it. (Younger me also wasn't bothered by the idea of a 10 year old working full time either.) This is a good book for teaching kids the value of responsibility, caring for others, and selflessness. My copy looks a little dated - Sarah Ida's outfits in the drawings are so retro-cool now!

Dana says

We liked the main character and the changes we saw across time.

Brooklyn says

Read for the 2016 Book Riot Read Harder Challenge.

PJ says

This is a wonderful read aloud for third grade on up. Sarah Ida has a bad attitude in the beginning of the book. She is determined to go out and find a job to make money but what she finds is a good friend. She learns about responsibility and trust. The ending is very touching and a book that you'll remember.

Emily says

Read with a student. Much lower than would normally appeal to me, but I appreciated it having plenty of character development to show to my kiddo.

Sharon Zink says

I love Clyde Robert Bulla. His writing is so down-to-earth about ordinary things. This story is about a girl who is sent to live with her aunt while her mother is ill. The girl has not been cooperative at home, and the aunt has been given instructions about how to treat her, instructions the girl does not like. This book is about how she copes and learns and grows.

Shell says

Read during a professional development class using this text for a new english language arts curriculum. Quick read but powerful.

Shuwen says

I've read this book more than once and I still love it. It's has a great story line and I really like it. The part I really love is that when Sarah starting working at the shoeshine store with Al, the old man, she was really not get used to it and feels weird. The part I don't like is that when Al is hit by a car while crossing the street and bought some supplies. It was sad, I mean, for me it was. I really love the writer of this book how she writes the settings, details and the dialogue that she add it. I give this book a 5 star!

Onna says

This is such a good book I had to read it and write a essay on it I loved it everyone else hated it.

Cheryl says

Very short read, but packs a lot in and is enjoyable, too. The more I read of Bulla, the more I want to. And apparently somebody else at my new little old library does, too, because at the beginning of this there's the list of Other Books by... and several of them are circled. Sure, technically it's defacing public property, but I

think it's cute to see.

Books Kids Like says

Sarah Ida's father is away from home quite often, and Sarah and her mother don't get along very well. Sarah feels that her parents don't care because they don't pay any attention to her. However, when she starts running with the wrong crowd at school, they take notice. Sarah's parents decide that she should spend the summer with her Aunt Claudia in Palmville. Sarah resents her parents' decision and feels that they simply want to get rid of her. So, she goes to Palmville with a ready-made chip on her shoulder. Her resentment grows when Aunt Claudia refuses to give her any spending money. Sarah vows to get a job, and Aunt Claudia calls her bluff. To save face, Sarah gets a job with Al, the shoeshine man. Because of Al, Sarah resolves her frustration toward her parents and begins to feel a sense of self-worth. When Al is hit by a car, Sarah carries on the business by herself. *Shoeshine Girl* was originally published in 1975 so the book's setting may be outdated, but the message is timeless. A child neglected by her parents turns to negative behavior for attention. The parents decide they can't cope and send the child off to stay with a relative. The child finds a mentor and changes for the better. Bulla's books are wonderfully accessible to elementary-age children. Thank heavens, there are still a few in-print!

Gillian says

Potential useful ideas for a class read-aloud, but I'll be missing out some of the sexist nonsense.

David says

The characters of the story really came alive for me. I would like to know more about them.

Josiah says

I love the writing of Clyde Robert Bulla. From the first time I picked up and read *The Chalk Box Kid*, I was enchanted by the sensitive ease of the stories that he has to tell, of the way that the tender caring inside all of his good characters (and even some of the bad) shows through like a watermark on every page. There's something really magical about reading any Clyde Robert Bulla book, but I have to say that *Shoeshine Girl* is arguably his magnum opus.

We aren't given a lot of detail about ten-year-old Sarah Ida's life before the opening pages, which begin with her arrival via train at her Aunt Claudia's house. It seems that Sarah Ida's parents had a none too positive view of their daughter's overall attitude, and frequent clashes between Sarah Ida and her ill mother were making the family environment a growingly hostile one. Sarah Ida takes a diametrically opposed view to that of her parents about who's at fault in the situation, but what really matters now is that she's living with her aunt for the time being, and she has to find a way to make the best of it.

Sarah Ida never could have dreamed of the changes that would come about in her mindset over the next several weeks, and to be honest, I as the reader was also caught off guard. I generally think that I have a pretty good handle on the type of material that will be covered in a Clyde Robert Bulla short novel, but *Shoeshine Girl* mixes it up by throwing a number of unexpected curves. Which characters will become major players and which will affect the narrative from a less direct perspective is hard to discern ahead of time, and in that kind of storytelling atmosphere, real surprises can happen. And when it comes to Sarah Ida and the community of friends that she eventually comes to see around her in her aunt's hometown, a surprise is almost always waiting just on the other side of the page.

Shoeshine Girl addresses a number of emotional issues, most from the perspective of Sarah Ida. She feels unwanted and even abandoned by her parents, and oppressed by what she sees as the unreasonable behavioral demands of her Aunt Claudia. Regardless of what Sarah Ida might say, she wants to be close to people, but in a new town that is really only a temporary stop, she knows that there might not be much point in putting down roots. She wants to go home, but she's not enthusiastic about the idea of rejoining her parents; so, what's a girl to do who feels that she has already been deemed by the world to be unfit after only ten years of life? Where can she turn to when even her parents have hurt her?

Given much freedom to do what she wishes, Sarah Ida finds herself an unlikely job as a shoeshine girl at a little stand in town. It's not a glamorous position and requires hard physical labor, but it offers Sarah Ida paid wages. However, most important, it is through her employment at the stand and her uncertain, slowly growing relationship with the owner, Mr. Winkler, that Sarah Ida first begins to glimpse the first burgeoning rays of what could be nothing but a light in the darkness, illuminating the tunnel from the other side. What follows is truly something of a mini miracle, changing the hearts of more than one person.

It's remarkable how Clyde Robert Bulla is able to give us such a meaningful, substantial story in only eighty-four pages of large print, many of which are taken up by full-page illustrations. *Shoeshine Girl* is a wonder of writing, a demonstration that no matter how brief the storytelling, a good author who understands human emotion is never limited in his or her ability to touch us all with a marvelous tale. I would give three and a half stars to *Shoeshine Girl*, and I strongly considered rounding up that in-between rating to four stars.
