



The Steps

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Twelve-year-old Annabel thought Christmas break was going to be *amazing*. She'd planned to stay home in New York City with her best friend and do traditional things like go ice-skating in Rockefeller Center, hit the after-Christmas sale at Bloomingdale's, and scream with the *TRL* crowd at MTV in Times Square. But when her best friend bails, Annabel's mom decides it's high time Annabel visit her father and his *new* family in Australia.

Annabel is not pleased about traveling around the world to meet "the steps" -- twelve-year-old fashion-disaster stepsister, five-year-old stepbrother, and baby half sister -- but she's not going to waste this chance to steal her father back.

The Steps Details

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Author : Rachel Cohn

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Tori says

2003- I first fell in love with Rachel Cohn's writing with her book Gingerbread, which focused on teenagers. This story is focused more on the preteen set. Annabel has quite the confusing family, as demonstrated by the family ""tree"" on the cover, which I thought was a nice touch. During Christmas break, her mother decides she should spend some time with her father, who happens to now be married, have two stepchildren and a new baby with his new wife, and oh yeah, lives in Sydney, Australia. I noticed a lot of similarities between this story and Gingerbread, however, I still thought it was an entertaining read. Annabel is a awesome kid, someone you'd want as your younger sister. I only wish the story had been longer and developed some of the characters a little more fully.

Kimberly says

Literature Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction

Ages: 8-12 years

This book is aimed at elementary/middle schoolers, and addresses the issue of step-family.

When Annabel is disrupted from her summer plans of hanging around her hometown of New York City, she is sent halfway across the world to spend time with her bio Dad, Jack, and, as she says, a bazillion step brothers and sisters.

The story follows Annabel's journey as she comes to terms with her steps, her Dad, her Mom, and her soon to be more steps when her mother remarries.

This book is a good jumping off point given today myriad configurations of family. It does read as a little dated due to specific cultural references, but the foundational idea of the book still resonates.

Ashley says

Read this book for the first time while in middle school and back then, I thought it was the best book ever. It was a short (100 pages) fun easy read and when I read it again last summer, I finished in a hour or so! Even the the book is aimed for girls between the ages of 8-13, if you are looking for something easy and fun, I'd totally recommend it to you

Brandii13 says

The book *The Steps*, is a book about a twelve year old girl named Annabel. She is just about to go on christmas break and is extremely excited for it. Annabel and her friend were supposed to hang-out the whole break in NYC but her friend bails on her and goes somewhere else. Annabel's mom tell her that she should go to her dad's house and spend some time with him. But Annabel doesn't want to meet the new family. Her dad lives half way around the world and doesn't want to go just to meet the "steps" as she likes to call them.

read this book to see what will happen when Annabel goes to meet "the steps".

Jennie says

Annabel is off to Sydney, Australia. This was not her idea and doesn't sound like fun--she had a perfectly lovely winter break planned in New York, thank you very much. But Annabel's dad has remarried and lives in Australia now with his new wife, two kids from her first marriage, and their new baby. Annabel's mission? To bring her dad back to the US where he belongs. With her. Of course, it doesn't end that way and we have several heart-warming moments about the meaning of family. On the cover of the edition I read, there was a very helpful family tree because there are a lot of crazy relationships!

Amy Snyder says

This was a very cute book for middle school level readers. It is about a girl names Anabel, or Anna the Belle as her father likes to call her. She is in middle school and is trying to handle her new life filled with a step mom and step siblings who live in Australia with her dad, and her mom and her new boyfriend who's son happens to go to her school and is called Wheaties. Anabel loves living in her New York City apartment with her mother and her grandmother, but she misses her dad who has moved to Australia. His new wife has two children, a daughter, Lucy, who is Anabel's age, and her younger brother Angus. They also have a new baby named Beatrice. Lucy and Angus' father was killed in a car accident before their mother, Penny, met Anabel's father, Jack. Jack used to be married to Angelina, an actress and Anabel's mom. They were young and hipsters when they had Anabel, and therefore Anabel calls them by their first names. Angelina is now dating Harvey, Wheaties father and a very successful mattress salesman. Angelina decides that Anabel should go visit Jack and his family in Australia for the Christmas break. Anabel does not want to meet her step mother or step siblings, and is not kind to them when she arrives. Her plan is to convince Jack to come home to New York with her. Lucy is very excited to meet Anabel and wants all her attention, but her father screws up her first meal by forgetting that she is a vegetarian. Eventually, Anabel tries to spend some time with Lucy by going shopping with her, and she helps Lucy to deal with the girls at school who do not like her and make fun of the way she dresses. Anabel also meets Ben, Lucy's former step brother who Anabel develops a crush on. While Lucy and Anabel don't become friends, they come to an understanding that they are both angry at their parents. Angelina calls to surprise Anabel and tells her that she and Harvey are getting married and that they are expecting a baby. This sends Anabel over the edge and she and Lucy run away to go see Lucy's grandmother, who she was denied a visit because of Anabel's arrival. They board a train and go on an adventure before they arrive at the grandmother's house. Both families are so worried that Anabel's mother, Harvey, and Wheaties fly to Australia to find the girls. Eventually they are found and everyone goes back to Jack and Penny's house. While at the grandmother's. Anabel is able to see Ben one more time as he and his father come for a visit, and he and Anabel kiss. In the end, when Anabel returns home, she and Lucy are good friends and communicate via email. Anabel is even planning to go back for a summer visit and Lucy and her family are planning a visit to New York. A sweet book about learning to accept the family you

have even if you had no choice in who they are.

Robyn says

Annabel Schubert has a complicated family. Her parents broke up when she was just a kid; her father remarried and moved to Australia, where his new wife (who also had children) gave birth to Annabel's new half-sister. Now her mom is getting serious with her boyfriend, leaving Annabel with the prospect of yet another step-sibling. When Annabel is forced to spend her summer vacation visiting her father and his new family, she knows she needs to find a way to bring her father back home and shorten the family tree. Yet despite her best efforts not to like "the steps," Annabel finds herself growing more and more attached and finally realizes that family is family, no matter how complicated that might be.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and the complexity of Annabel's relationships. Rachel Cohn captures the preteen voice perfectly. Every chapter finds Annabel flip-flopping on her emotions and perceptions towards her family members; but the wavering is done in such a natural way that it is easy to get caught up in the same emotions. Many tween novels end up sounding overly-dramatic when narrators begin discussing their families, but Annabel's complaints and fears just sound real. Any young reader with a complicated family life can relate to the emotions Annabel feels and this is a great read to help kids adapt to new living situations and new family members. Plus it's really entertaining; I can't wait to read the sequel!

Audiobook: Caitlin Greer narrates this tween tale and displays just the right amount of sarcasm and exasperation to make her plausible and bring the drama to life.

Parents: [View the Common Sense Media Review](#)

Brittian R says

The Steps starts off with a girl named Annabel. Her mom said she had to go to her Dad's house for Christmas this year. Annabel was not in the mood to see her dad and her step sister Lucy and step brother Angus. Annabel thought that Lucy and Angus are going to take her dad away from her. During the time she was there her and Lucy were becoming more close, but was still annoyed that they treated her like her guest even though it was her dad. Her and Lucy were getting sick of being bored, so they ran away to Lucy's Granny Neil's house. Annabel meets this boy named Ben, and she thought she was in love. The story ends with Annabel not wanting to leave Australia and wants to come back next Christmas. People should read this book because it is a very cute and hilarious book.

Kim B. says

Annabel Schubert is a marvelous character. Normally I would hate a girl like her: fashion-obsessed, resentful of her step-family, etc. However, she is so much like a real person, and a funny and highly likable one at that, that she won me over quickly. Sure, she is sometimes snobbish, resentful, and irksome, but her every emotion is totally realistic. Her whole family, steps and all, did as well, and stood out as individual characters. And did I mention this book is really, really funny? 'Cause it is. Quite impressive work Rachel Cohn has done here. I'll definitely read more of her stuff now.

Yu Tong Mei says

This book shows the conflict of two sisters. Annabel and Lucy were more like enemies. Annabel didn't like Lucy so much because she is her stepsister. When Lucy and her mother was about to travel to Australia to meet her new family, Annabel started to have some evil plans. She thought of many ways to torture her new stepsister.

It's often that people are having objective opinions based on relationship. In this book, author described the complicated rerelationship between these two stepsisters. I like this book because it made us realized how hard it is to build a relationship. It also difficult to get someone's trust. SO, when I was reading this book, I feel like I watching the characters to build their trusts.

Kaethe says

Annabel has traveled from New York, NY to Sydney, Australia to meet her new step family for the first time. There is conflict, there is a risky adventure, bonds are formed. And then Annabel gets more family. Annabel is self-assured, even a little cocky, but not really prepared for a new family, and she believes she can talk her dad out of leaving them and coming home. Apparently, twelve is a delusional age. I'd expect it to go over well with fans of Moving Day.

Library copy.

Carrie says

The Steps by Rachel Cohn captures the voice, insecurities, and inner dialogue of tweens perfectly. Tweens in particular are trying to figure out how they fit in, and Annabel exemplifies this when she visits her father and discovers she's one of many people he loves. Though her exterior is cool and her attitude even chillier, Annabel is still an insecure girl who wants to fit in and be accepted. She is full of impulsive, spiteful remarks that are typical of tweens. She's also quick with the humor and honesty that can only be found with adolescents this age as well. Tween girls in particular will enjoy this book because it so so relevant to their own lives. Spot on.

Xiao Yan says

Twelve-year-old Annabel was planning to stay home with her best friend in Nyc for Christmas, but everything gets ruined. Her mom decides that she should visit her dad and his "new" family in Australia. Disappointed, she goes and meets "the steps", a twelve-year-old fashion-disaster stepsister, a five-year-old stepbrother, and a baby half sister. She is determined to win her father back with this trip. During this time, she learns more about her other family members and realizes that her dad still loves her even though he is with someone else. She returns back liking her step family more. This book was okay and it had a lot about family issues. People that like family issues should read this. This book was really that interesting though!

L12_markmesserly says

This review pertains to the 2003 hardcover edition.

This first-person narrative is about twelve-year-old Annabel, a Manhattan pre-teen navigating radical changes in her family. Her parents, Jack and Angelina, divorced following a rocky marriage. Jack moved to Australia to live with his second wife, leaving Annabel in New York with Angelina. Annabel is jealous of her Australian blended family, particularly towards twelve-year-old Lucy. When Annabel has a chance to visit Australia, she envisions ways to get Jack back to the U.S. Determined to dislike everything about the strange new family blend, she and Lucy embark upon a transformative, radical adventure.

The cover is very appealing and amusing, showing a family tree of the *bazillions of steps*, (stepbrothers, and stepsisters) with Annabel in the middle. The narrative is very pleasant, funny, and seems appropriate for the character. There are no excessively bitter, violent, or offensive occurrences. There is one brief scene referencing a change of life. Culturally, there are many opportunities to sample Australian culture. Characters find accents amusing, and terminology confusing at times, e.g. brushing teeth vs. cleaning teeth.

Kirkus Reviews suggest an age range of 11-14. The Lexile rating is 860L. For slightly younger readers, *Shug* (Jenny Han, ISBN: 9781416909439, Lexile 680L) is about a twelve-year-old girl with bickering parents and similar preteen themes. *Surviving the Applewhites* by Stephanie S. Tolan (ISBN: 9780064410441, Lexile 820L) is about a boy sent to live at an unusual home school, featuring similar themes of blending with different families.

In a classroom setting, themes related to diversity of families serve as a basis for activities. Students might engage in a quick-write, including definitions, phrases, etc. to define family. Small groups might discuss their ideas, then creating a larger poster for a gallery-walk activity. Groups or individuals then rotate to the posters, adding new ideas. Other themes include jealousy and conflict resolution, and tolerance towards cultural differences.

Ms. Patterson says

Annabel is going to visit her dad over Christmas vacation in Australia and finally meet her steps. Feeling left out and missing her dad over the two years he's been gone, Annabel begins her trip with the idea that she will convince her dad to return to NYC with her. During her stay, Annabel's jealousy slowly turns to friendship and more with her new extended family.

Ideally suited for middle grades readers, I'd recommend it for grades 5 and 6 especially. THE STEPS portrays the difficulty kids experience when their parents remarry and suddenly people with nothing in common are thrown together as siblings. I found this a solid story, filled with funny episodes in order to make for an entertaining read. Some of the pop references are dated, which may cause some readers to dislike the book. (References to the movie TITANIC and the FRIENDS TV show.)
