



The Whole Truth

Kit Pearson

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Newly orphaned Polly and Maud travel by train from Winnipeg to British Columbia to live with relatives on an island situated between Vancouver and Victoria. Although Polly and Maud have never met them, their new family welcomes them with open arms but the girls have a terrible secret...

The Whole Truth Details

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Author : Kit Pearson

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From Reader Review The Whole Truth for online ebook

Rachel says

I didn't think that Kit Pearson would still impact me so strongly as an adult. I read all of her books at a middle school age but before starting to read this one, I assumed that I would not feel the same way about her writing. This was an unfounded assumption. Her style of writing is brilliant -- she captures Polly's character flawlessly, and does well to write on a theme that all children know well (that the adults in their life will not tell them "the whole truth" because they have decided the child is "too young"). I also love how the Canadian setting is at the heart of the story -- Pearson never forgets to make the background an integral part of her novels, which gives her writing complexity and depth. I love how Canadian this novel is!

Despite being set in Depression times (which mainly helps to drive the plot forward), I think that Polly's character is so completely relatable, even to an adult looking back on their childhood. I loved it, and it has renewed my faith in Pearson, and the future of Canadian YA lit.

💖Isabella💖 says

This is my new favourite book, the part when her father came back made me want to cry

JennLynn says

A wonderful story set in the Depression. Two sisters are sent to their grandmother's on an isolated British Columbia island following their father's apparent death.. The elder has the chance to go to boarding school as she'd always dreamed. The younger comes to thrive on island life. But they are both keeping a secret that threatens to overwhelm them. Is their father really dead? I got so immersed in this book, and came to love Kingfisher Island just as much as Polly. Despite the troubles that brought her there, she managed to make a good life in hard times. B+

Arista Atsira says

For me, Kit Pearson was the author who created that unbreakable bond between myself and books. After reading A Handful of Time when I was a young girl, I have loved reading and devoured countless books.

Even as an adult, Kit Pearson can keep my love of reading alive, and The Whole Truth is no exception! Polly and Maud are characters that are timeless and relatable. I fell in love with each and every character in this book and I never wanted their stories to end!

The only reason Kit lost the fifth star for this book is because I was left with a huge unanswered question! In the book, little Polly is considered "too young" to know all the adult answers... but I was dearly hoping all would be revealed by the end of the story. What a disappointment that it wasn't.

That aside, this is an excellent book and well worth reading.

Sarah Thornton says

The complicity of adults seen through the eyes of their children.

Zoe says

4/5

Iris says

"The Whole Truth" is in every way a mystery, a realistic fiction and coming-of age story. When Polly and her sister Maud are sent away to live with their grandmother on Kingfisher Island because their father was said to have mysteriously drowned, all is lost. Polly mourns the loss of him, missing two full weeks of school once she arrives there. But Maud on the other hand, is ecstatic about her boarding school, St. Winnie's and in no time escapes in a world of religion and acceptance. She becomes a full full time boarder and can only come home twice a year. Polly is confused; where is her sister when she needs her the most! She can't stop thinking about her father, but not for the reason everyone around her believes. Here's where the mystery kicks in; Maud and Polly have a dark secret that will cut ties with their family, their friends and their future; their father is alive. He was "set up" to steal a large sum of money from the bank and then "staged his death" so that he could move to Ontario and get a job to support his two daughters. But as soon as Polly begins to like her life on the island, and begins to accept the "loss" of her father, he comes back to visit. It's a commotion of distrust, prejudice and faithfulness after that, but it gets better.... I promise :D

Emma says

During the depression, nine-year-old Polly's life is turned upside down when her father is reported dead. Polly and her fifteen-year-old sister Maud leave Winnipeg to go live with the Grandmother they can't even remember who lives on an island outside of Victoria. Leaving everything they know behind, the girls move to the small island with the family they don't even know. While Maud is sent to a girl's school in Victoria, Polly goes to the local school on the island and adapts to her new life. But Polly's secrets are becoming difficult to keep, not to mention her family seems to be keeping secrets from her. As Polly grows up on the island, she learns that the truth really can set you free.

I was a really big fan of Kit Pearson when I was younger, so when I saw this book in the bookstore I knew I had to find it at my library. *The Whole Truth* begins in 1932 during the depression. While Maud and Polly lived in poverty in Winnipeg, their Grandmother is quite well off and the family hunts, fishes and grows their own vegetables so they never have to worry about food. This book is mainly about Polly growing up, dealing with losing someone and struggling with secrets. Polly also learns that the people in her life are neither good nor bad, but often somewhere in-between. While I enjoyed the setting and the themes, this book didn't live up to my expectations. While there are many children's books that can be loved by anyone, I'm not sure that

this is one of them. I felt like this was written specifically for children Polly's age and the writing style was too young for my taste. The plot dragged a bit mid way through and sometimes the pacing didn't feel right. However, I thought the characters were realistic and I liked how the reader was shown the good and bad sides of many of them. I felt a lot of what Polly was feeling, especially her frustrations with Maud and her sadness upon hearing about her Grandmother's flaws. While it was an interesting story with a beautiful setting, nothing lived up to my memories of how wonderful Kit Pearson's other books are. This made me want to re-read some of Pearson's books (specifically *The Sky is Falling*) to see if they are as good as I remember or if they are more for younger children and won't be as appealing to me now. If you are interested in Kit Pearson's books, I'd recommend starting with *The Guests of War* trilogy and skipping this one for now. However, I think *The Whole Truth* would be most enjoyed by young girls, especially if they are interested in historical fiction (like I was.)

3/5

Danielle says

I loved Kit Pearson's books as a kid, so I was really excited to pick up one of her newer novels from the library. I have to say, however, that I was pretty disappointed with this one. I found myself just keep waiting for it to get to the point, but it never really seemed to. I'm not sure if it's because I was introduced to this later in life or an actually decline in quality, but I'd have rather revisited the *Guests of War* trilogy than spend my time on this one.

Vikki VanSickle says

Canada, 1932. Shy Polly and her bold older sister Maud have been taken in by their estranged Scottish grandmother after the shocking and untimely death of their father. They've traveled halfway across the country, from Winnipeg to a remote island off the coast of B.C. to Gran's house, where there is no indoor plumbing, no electricity, and a whole host of friendly, gregarious strangers and more than a few chickens. When Maud takes off for boarding school less than a week after their arrival, Polly is not sure she can survive. But within a few months she has a new friend (easy going Biddy), a new hobby (painting), and a new pet (the naughty but lovable Tarka- you can tell Pearson adores dogs by her loving and accurate descriptions of him). But on the edge of all this happiness is the truth that Polly and Maud have sworn to keep secret, the truth regarding their father and his unusual demise.

The missing/dead father plot adds tension and mystery to the story, but for me it takes a backseat to the wonderful coming of age portrait Pearson has created in this novel. Watching Polly bloom is an absolute pleasure. Pearson manages to bring her young protagonist out of her shell without straying from the bones of her character. I enjoyed Polly's struggle with meat-eating, given her tender hearted feelings towards animals. Her relationship with the headstrong and fiercely opinionated Maud is aptly complicated and gives Pearson a stage to explore Polly's growing autonomy. I love how Pearson surrounds Polly with a cast of warm and loving characters that are far from perfect, but provide the support that Polly was previously missing in her life.

Pearson's gifts as a writer are innumerable, but what makes her books classic is her uncanny ability to understand and empathize with the adolescent mind. She taps directly into the core of childhood and

addresses all of the fears, anxieties, and joy of that narrow slice of time between the ages of 9-12. She is one of my writing mentors, a gifted wordsmith who has perfected the art of the middle grade novel***. Her books always feel timeless, regardless of the era they are set in, which just proves that great writing never goes out of style.

Ashley Dallas says

Some parts of this book were really good, such as the descriptions of the west coast and the gulf islands, as well as the look into Canadian history. And it's easy to get into Polly's head; all of her motivations and logic and feelings seem pretty on par with people that age. However, what really bothered me about this book was the amount of irrelevant information that we had to read about. For example, what does Polly's brief (and failed) attempt at vegetarianism contribute to the story? There just seemed to be a lot of irrelevant details, and characters, that we had to read about even though they weren't terribly interesting and served no purpose to the story. It also really bugged me that we never found out what the big fight between Polly's parents and grandparents was about, especially since it got mentioned so often. So overall, it was a quick and easy read, had some interesting bits about Canadian history, but wasn't terribly interesting and would have definitely been better for a younger audience.

Sarah says

Easy read with engaging characters.

Nicole Roccas says

This was just a nice, refreshing YA read. I loved the setting and the lessons the characters learned were poignant.

Meaghan says

Polly Brown and her older sister Maud are sent to live with their grandmother on Kingfisher Island, off the coast of British Columbia, after their father dies under mysterious circumstances. The two girls adapt to their new life, but the secret of what really happened to their father always lingers just beneath the surface. Set during the Great Depression, *The Whole Truth* is Polly's story from the time she comes to live with her grandmother at age 9 until she's almost 13 and getting ready to go away to boarding school in Victoria.

Kit Pearson was one of my absolute favourite writers when I was a child so I'm always happy to find a new book by her. The cover blurb on *The Whole Truth* says "Pearson's gift is to always write straight from the well of childhood feeling," and it's true: she has a knack for conveying a child's thought processes and the ways in which children perceive the world. I thought this came across particularly well in her last book, *A Perfect Gentle Knight*, which is outstanding. *The Whole Truth* doesn't quite match up to it, but it is still a great read and Polly is a believable, relatable protagonist. She struggles to understand the behaviour of the older characters around her, including her grandmother, who is very kind to her but possibly prejudiced

towards others, and the rather confounding Maud, who becomes a religious zealot after going to boarding school. At the same time, she's trying to find her own identity: she goes through fairly normal things like nervousness about boys and flirting with vegetarianism all while dealing with the intense secrets of her family history and trying to discover where she fits in with her new family on the island.

The main theme of the book is this understanding of self and of others; the story is told in a somewhat episodic style that allows Pearson to illustrate this theme through Polly's experiences with several characters and incidents. This isn't a book where everything ties together neatly at the end. It's a chronicle of life on one small island seen through the eyes of one young girl. The idyllic and beautifully-drawn island setting should bring back memories of childhood summer days spent adventuring outdoors with friends and family. But the stress Polly suffers having to keep her family's deep, dark secret is always there, intruding on her happy new life. In a way, it's like Pearson is telling two separate stories that don't quite mesh, somehow. Polly's past with her father is certainly the main focus of the novel, but the balance between that aspect of her life and her new life feels slightly off, particularly in the novel's resolution, which is almost anticlimactic. If Goodreads allowed half stars, I would give this 3.5.

Ella says

An excellent read full of love and inspiration to young minds.
