



Ellie McDoodle: Have Pen, Will Travel

Ruth McNally Barshaw

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Ellie McDougal (better known to her friends as Ellie *McDoodle* because she loves to draw) is a nearly-twelve-year-old prisoner . . . of her aunt, uncle, three annoying cousins, and her baby brother, Ben-Ben. Sentenced to a week-long camping trip with them while her parents are out of town, Ellie is absolutely, positively determined to hate every single minute of the experience. Thank goodness she at least has her sketch journal, in which she records all the excruciating (and okay, *very* funny) details. Mosquito bites and trips to the Fred Moose museum she can handle. But how will she keep her journal from falling into Er-ick the Enemy's hands? And what will happen when—gasp—she actually starts having fun? Part graphic novel, part confessional journal, part wilderness survival guide, Ellie's story is a treat for young campers, vacationers, or anyone looking for a great summer read.

Ellie McDoodle: Have Pen, Will Travel Details

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Author : Ruth McNally Barshaw

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From Reader Review Ellie McDoodle: Have Pen, Will Travel for online ebook

Hannah says

not that good

Mehsi says

Ellie is going camping with her uncle and aunt and their kids, how bad could a week be?

Well, if you are Ellie Complainelly then it is a terrible terrible terrible week. Yep. My first Boekenfestijn boek and it isn't a good one. I liked Ellie in the first pages, but then her complaining hit off and well, I didn't enjoy the book as much as I would if Ellie would have stopped whining/complaining/acting all superior in time. Not at the end of the book. Because by then I was just already so over her attitude.

I get that going out with family is poopy, but do you need to treat them like this? Even drawing one of them as a monster? Even calling them names? She constantly was being a grump towards them, no matter what they tried or did. Oh no, I can't have my favourite food, oh no I have to sleep with those annoying nephews/nieces, oh no I have to go to a fun museum, oh no *insert something else*.

I did like it when she met that boy, though I wish that was expanded a bit more. Those parts were like a breath of fresh air to me, finally something good, and we finally saw an Ellie I quite liked. I also would have loved to see what happened when she got home. Did she call him? Was it the right number? Where they close to each other? Or did they live very far apart?

I also don't get why she took her journal with her EVERYWHERE. Swimming, Check. Catching frogs, Check. Playing games with family, Check. Sure, not to the shower, but I think if she could have done that she would have. I get that she doesn't want to leave it behind, but really, I just found it terribly rude that she kept drawing all the time.

I didn't approve of her aunt reading the journal. Really, you find your son reading it, and then continue reading it as well? Wow, good example you are setting there. I do so hope that when I have a daughter/niece that I respect her privacy and not read her stuff if she doesn't want me to. *sighs*

Of course it magically set ground to a nice chat between them, which instead of making me go awww, made me go urgh, as I still wasn't approving of her reading the journal.

What did I like? Well, when we finally saw Eric instead of the dumb monster, the art was really nice and terrific (I do love a cartoony style + I love how well Ellie (or the illustrator) could draw animals), I liked seeing the camping adventures (minus all the poopy attitude, just ignore those and it is a really fun trip). The games were pretty OK too, though some were a bit weird. :P So I am rating this book 2 stars because there were still elements I did enjoy.

And I will also be reading the second book in the hopes that it gets better. I do hope that Ellie has learned from this adventure. Don't judge too much, give people a chance, less superiority is nice, and if you need

help/feel unhappy talk to someone.

Review first posted at <https://twirlingbookprincess.com/>

Rowan says

ellie mcdoodle is a hilarious girl with crazy family. I can't wait to read the second one!

Kim Norman says

This is the graphic novel evolved into the art form it was meant to be: character-driven, funny and even educational. (I loved Ellie's drawings and descriptions of their camping games and activities.) Of course, we know girls are more accepting, democratic readers than boys, but -- for a time -- it seemed as though graphic novels were aimed only at boys. Ruth Barshaw has created a series that will draw girls to the genre and hook them for good... on good books!

Betsy says

How would you go about defining the word "torture"? If you were Ellie McDougal (McDoodle, to those in the know) you might define it as, "a family vacation with your monkey-boy little brother, annoying cousins, and boring aunt and uncle in the woods of Higgins Lake." Which, of course, is exactly what Ellie has been subjected to. Stuck with intolerable relatives, she decides to make the most of her ordeal by recording everything in her sketchbook (the one you, the reader, are reading) and getting some time away from the craziness. Of course, a series of incidents shows Ellie that maybe her extended family isn't the crew of monsters she thought they were. Maybe, in fact, they can all be a lot of fun and the summer isn't totally ruined after all. Maybe.

So what is this book exactly? I mean, on the outset it looks like a sketchbook with sentences in between the pictures. Obviously there are a lot more written sections than drawn sections, but the pictures are pretty steady throughout. So how do you categorize this book? It's not a graphic novel, since the pictures are sporadic and pop up only at random intervals. It's not a comic book either, nor is it a straight written novel. At this point in time, the only option left is the phrase, "illustrated novel". It's not perfect, but it's the only thing I've found to describe Barshaw's style. Plus it's a style, moreover, that I think is going to inspire a whole generation of kids. I can picture young 'uns bugging their parents to buy them sketchbooks and blank pages, just so that they can create highly illustrated personal diaries like Ellie/Ruth. Heck, while reading this I myself wished I knew how to draw, just so that I could jazz up my own life with pictures galore. And I know I can't be alone.

And man, did I like it. First of all, there were the obvious Michigan connections that drew me in. Using your hand to describe where you live in the state (complete with an image of a bunny jumping a mitten, in terms of the Upper and Lower Peninsulas). A kid from Kalamazoo (woo-hoo, hometown!). Visiting with other kids and finding that you don't like their cereals. Man, did that ring some bells! Ms. Barshaw has an almost eerie ability to either remember or channel instances from a kid's daily life that are all but forgotten by adults. Plus she just hits characters dead on. The "villains" at the beginning successfully become real three-dimensional

people by the story's end. The sketches are great fun, and then there are some great ideas for games. Ms. Barshaw knows that you have to break up your narrative sometimes with an interesting little sidenote here and there. In this case, the sidenotes are games complete with instructions for Human Pretzel, Spoons (something I'd like to try out), Sardines, and others.

Part Harriet the Spy, and part Amelia's Notebook, "Ellie McDoodle" is just one of those books you can't help but enjoy. It flies low on the radar, so I suggest discovering it for yourself. There's never been a better time to indulge in a book that can offer you cool pictures, great characters, a fun story, and a little redemption on the side. A small pure gem.

Katie Spina says

I got a copy of this book signed for my 7 year old at Midwest Writers Workshop 2017. The author was super nice and you can tell she loves what she does. Now, my son's review of this book.

3 words. Oh. My. GOSH! It's sooooo good! My mom needs to get all the rest of them from the library like yesterday. I loved this book!

christa says

Ellie McDoodle is a pre-teen journal diarist stuck on a long camping trip with some annoying cousins and an aunt who spit talks in this cute, illustrated novel about family relationships.

Allison says

not my favorite but not bad. Quick read. Good background book.

babyhippoface says

This could be touted as a "*Diary of a Wimpy Kid* for Girls." And although it doesn't contain near the humor *Wimpy Kid* does, I predict this book will be quite popular in my library, simply for its style. It basically looks just like Greg Heffley's journal, but this one is about a girl, Ellie McDougal (Ellie *McDoodle* to her friends, who know she loves to draw).

When her parents have to leave town to attend a distant family funeral, Ellie and her little brother, Ben-Ben, are forced to go on a camping trip with her Aunt Mug (who is in a perpetual bad mood and spits when she talks), her booooring Uncle Ewing, and three annoying cousins. Her only salvation? A brand new journal, which she fills with drawings galore and a running narrative of the camping trip.

Like I said, this isn't as funny as *Wimpy Kid* (which I didn't really like because I thought Greg was completely self-centered and obnoxious, but kids think is hysterical), but I **like** Ellie, and that makes all the difference. She's bright, imaginative, and resourceful. Yes, she whines a lot in the journal, but who among us

hasn't been there: thrust into a situation in which we don't want to be and from which we cannot escape, with people whom we cannot stand. That's one big bummer.

But Ellie still tries to have fun. Granted, she does it expecting the worst, but she still does it. She teaches her family members and fellow campers new games (Human Pretzel is really fun to play, by the way; it can be hard, but lots of laughs), sings songs, and catches frogs at the mucky pond.

When creepy cousin Eric (or Er-ick, as Ellie calls him) steals her journal and reads it, then passes it along to his mother, Ellie is overwhelmed with guilt for the insulting things it contains. She determines to try to make amends, and darned if things don't get better. Her horrid family isn't quite as horrid as she thought, apparently.

While they may not fall over laughing at Ellie McDoodle (as some parents have told me their children have done at *Wimpy Kid*), they'll like her enough to finish the book and ask if there's a sequel.

Dustyloup says

This story is universal. Not just a girls book! Better than the wimpy kid books in my opinion.

Scope says

An Important Business Man runs into another Important Business Man on Wall Street:

I.B.M. 1: So, have you heard about the story/illustration merger?

I.B.M. 2: Yes, yes, but that's only affecting teens.

IBM 1: Well that's true, male teenagers have been reaping big rewards. But it's having trickle-down effects to younger children as well.

IBM 2: Ha! Look, the next thing you're going to be telling me is that girls will be seeing some benefits. Man, are you out of touch or what?

IBM 1: Well then let me show you (hands over a copy of "Ellie McDoodle: Have Pen Will Travel"). The evidence is right here. The merger has been very successful. It's about a girl who is forced to go camping with relatives she doesn't like. The book itself is the sketchbook that she brought on her trip. It's amazing, she documents everything that happened.

IBM 2: Alright, some kid's drawings. How is this a book?

IBM 1: The story is in there too. It's sort of like a cross between a sketchbook and a diary. Over the course of seven days, Ellie gets to know these people that she had judged as being weird. You ever meet someone you didn't think you'd get along with and end up becoming friends? Ellie goes through that in this book.

IBM 2: So there's some stuff in there about being open-minded and giving people a chance?

IBM 1: Yep. There's a lot of humor too. If you've even been camping you know there's a lot of situations to draw from.

IBM 2: What's camping? It that like when you have to go to your second choice restaurant?

IBM 1: Uh, no. I'm sure you've seen it: tents, forests, campfires. Although in "Have Pen, Will Travel" Ellie and her relatives do "fake camping", as she calls it - they stay in a cabin. Look, you're a friend, so I'm going to let you in on this. I just bought 1000 shares of Graphic Novels for Upper Elementary Girls, and I suggest you do the same.

IBM 2: Well that stock has been on the rise lately, especially when the "Babymouse" IPO went public. I may just take your advice.

IBM 1: (iPhone rings) Well, I have to take this call. Back to work!

IBM 2: (Putting book in briefcase) Is it okay if I borrow this book? I think my daughter might be interested.

IBM 1: (Cracking a sly grin) Not a problem.

Rebecca McNutt says

This was an interesting graphic novel, a little goofy at times but definitely a book that will appeal to any reader who's ever been on that one dull family vacation that they just *know* will be a disaster - until they start enjoying it in an odd sort of way.

For Ellie McDougal, she finds solace in the one thing she can use to vent her annoyance at being dragged along camping - her favourite sketchbook, where she fills the pages with every bizarre occurrence of her holiday, sort of like a more artsy Harriet the Spy. And like Harriet the Spy, Ellie worries that her beloved drawings may fall into the wrong hands. When she finally starts having fun with the trip instead of hating it, the book shares an important lesson in that you should always give things a chance before deciding you don't like them.

While the book is a bit slow-paced at first and Ellie herself can be more of a mopey bringdown than Eeyore from *Winnie the Pooh*, convinced she'll hate everything about the family vacation, it's a fun summer read that both kids and adults would probably get a laugh out of.

Debra says

This is a very well graphic novel/illustrated novel for girls. Ellie is stuck with her horrid aunt and their horrid children for a week while her parents go to an out-of-state funeral. And, as that isn't bad enough, the next week will be spent camping. Ellie is a very talented young artist and she works out her frustration with life in her sketch book. But the things she says and draws in her sketch book would be toxic to the people she puts in it so she has to guard the book day and night.

The depicting of her boy cousin, Er-icK, as a horrible green monster with his beloved fedora hat is very

funny. Every one of her cousins and her baby brother have very annoying habits, but don't we all. Ellie finds that each of her cousins does have at least one good quality and she and her annoying aunt have a connection.

The story is well done and the drawings are excellent. A fun, quick to read book that has positive views on the family.

Sally Kruger says

THE ELLIE MCDODDLE DIARIES originally began in 2007. Having recently read HAVE PEN, WILL TRAVEL, I will now be suggesting the series for young girls looking for their own Wimpy Kid style reading experience. Author Ruth McNally Barshaw has created a dynamic female character that will inspire girls everywhere.

Due to the death of an elderly uncle of her father's, Ellie finds herself embarking on a camping adventure with her cousins. Everything about the impending week with her Aunt Mug, who spits when she talks, her Uncle Ewing, whose neck turns red when he's mad, and her three cousins promises to be the worst experience in her young life.

Arriving at the camping site, Ellie immediately discovers that this family doesn't do "camping" the way it was intended. Where are the tents and campfires and yummy, toasted marshmallows? Instead, she finds that everyone will be crammed together in a tiny cabin. How will she ever survive?

Ellie's passion for writing and drawing help her make some sense of this tragic week. She chronicles her adventures as she spies on her relatives and reluctantly participates in their crazy family antics. As she records events in her sketch diary, she begins to realize that some of the activities are kind of fun, and some of the people she is forced to be with have personalities she can sort of appreciate.

Readers of Ellie's vacation journal will find laugh-out-loud word play and unique visual representations of Ellie's week with a family she soon comes to know and love. Ruth McNally Barshaw will be part of an author panel at Siena Heights University's Celebration of Children's Literature on September 21, 2017.

Sarah says

This book is sort of similar to Diary of a Wimpy Kid or Dork Diaries in that it is a journal with drawings, telling a story from the perspective of a child. However, the character in this book is younger and the social issues involved are less middle-school-ish. This is a book I would definitely want to add to my 3rd or 4th grade classroom library. I think kids would really enjoy reading it. It is a very quick and easy read, with pictures illustrating a lot of the action, and would be a good one for some reluctant readers.

The story is about a girl who goes camping with her cousins, aunt and uncle. She isn't too happy about it and records that unhappiness in her journal. Some of the basic plot is pretty predictable, but the adventures along the way or not, and the story is told with humor and spirit.
