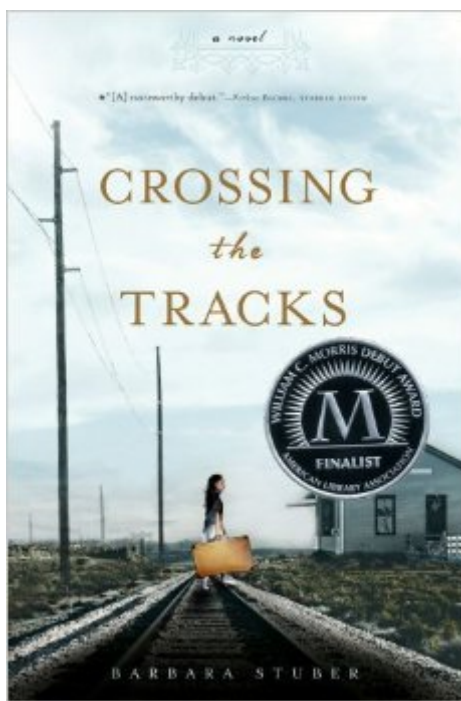


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Crossing The Tracks



Synopsis

At fifteen, Iris is a hobo of sorts—no home, no family, no plan. Her mother died when she was six, and her father focuses on his new girlfriend and his shoe business and has no time for his daughter. Without consulting her, he hires Iris out as a companion to a country doctor's elderly mother. Stuck in 1920s rural Missouri, Iris discovers that a hobo might be short for homeward bound—as she cultivates an eccentric cast of folks into family. But just as she starts to break out of her shell, tragedy strikes. Can Iris find the courage to carry on, and the cunning to outwit a menacing farmer? Beautifully realized characters and settings illuminate a story suffused with humor, warmth, and tear-jerking drama.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 680 (What's this?)

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Margaret K. McElderry Books; Reprint edition (May 24, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1416997040

ISBN-13: 978-1416997047

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (20 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #732,411 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #40 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Alternative Family #304 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > 20th Century #787 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1900s

Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Don't you love discovering a wonderful new author? I was so mesmerized by debut novelist Barbara Stuber's *Crossing the Tracks* that I just couldn't put it down, even when it was time for lunch, doing the laundry, or walking the dog. I fell in love with the main character, 15-year old Iris Baldwin; when the novel opens, it's 1926, and Iris' father, a shoe-store owner and widower who's soon to remarry, hires Iris out for the summer to be a companion to a country doctor's invalid mother in rural Missouri, far away from her only friend, Leroy. Iris, who narrates the novel, lost her mother when

she was five, and isn't at all close to her father. He's going to Kansas City to open a new shoe store, and clearly doesn't want her along. When Iris arrives at the Nesbitts, nothing is as she expects. Mrs. Nesbitt has fiery eyes, gold silk slippers, and a bamboo cane named Henry. Dr. Avery Nesbitt is as kind as can be, even saving an injured dog from the train tracks. Although Iris is wary of the Nesbitts' violent and abusive tenant farmer, Cecil Deets and his nasty 13-year old daughter, Dot, she begins to settle in to life at the Nesbitts, even helping Dr. Nesbitt out when he goes to deliver a neighbor's twins. The Nesbitts try to make her feel welcome and let her friend Leroy come to visit. During the course of the novel, their friendship develops in new and more romantic directions. But suddenly tragedy strikes, and Iris' life is turned inside out. She is forced to confront the real meaning of family; is it the people related to you by blood, or the people who cherish and nurture you? This tender, funny, and heartbreaking novel touches on many themes that will resonate with a teen audience: the meaning of home and family, love and loyalty, dealing with grief and loss, and facing domestic violence. Iris must deal with all these in the course of one summer. There is a suggestion of an incestuous relationship in the novel, although there are no graphic details, and because of that aspect I would recommend this book for middle school and above. There are several romantic scenes between Iris and Leroy, and these are also handled in a tasteful manner. One part of this novel I particularly appreciated was how much the reader grows to care about not only our main character, Iris, but the minor characters as well, who are exceptionally well-drawn. We meet many of the people who populate the small town where the Nesbitts live, and come to know them well. These range from the adorable dog, Marie, to Mrs. Nesbitt and even the abusive Cecil Deets and his daughter. Warning: have plenty of tissues on hand. This is a "3-hanky" read!

I was fortunate to attend a bookclub meeting recently where Barbara Stuber spoke. This is one fine, smart, witty, and very humble author. Where her stories come from could be a book in itself and maybe someday it will be. But for now, ignore the "young adult" quantifier which really only means it's for ages 12 through 112 and sit down for a non-stop read! The characters will draw you in and you will feel like you are standing in the corner (maybe one of the darker corners, but who knows) spying on everyone involved in the telling of this tale. Just be prepared to love it!

#16 Book Read in 2012 *Crossing the Tracks* (YA) This is a good YA historical fiction book. Iris lost her mother at a young age. Her father is very distant. He sends Iris away to be a housekeeper of sorts for a doctor and his ailing mother. Iris really connects with Dr. and Mrs. Nesbitt and begins to feel like she has finally found a family. But things are never really easy for Iris and this continues

throughout the book, though she ends up finding strength that she never knew she had. This book had great characters. Iris reminded me a bit of Harper Lee's Scout. I loved Dr. and Mrs. Nesbitt. Olive was a great comic character and Marie was the epitome of a loyal canine companion. This book was a good, quick read. I borrowed this book from the town library.

This is one of the best books I've read in months. It provides joy, heartache, terror, happy relationships and unbearably sad ones. Just when you think the story has become predictable the author puts a twist into the plot. I know it's trite to say "I couldn't put it down." but, I couldn't! When I got to the last page, I felt I'd left friends behind.

Crossing the Tracks has an authentic voice and a clever style, making the most of its truly engaging characters. A tale of healing through the gentle, caring presence of others, this story is both powerful and rich with detail. This is a rare find for the teen or young adult reader seeking both romance and substance. However, readers of all ages will relish Barb Stuber's portrayal of an era not so long ago - yet vastly different from today. The charm and subtleties of this story merit much thought and discussion. The general good feeling it provides is a rare pleasure. Don't miss meeting Iris Baldwin and the other "good folks" inside this cover!

Even though I am way, way past young adult, I loved this book. As a lifetime resident of Kansas City, with a father who lived in Atchison, Ks in the early part of the last century, I could visualize everything Ms. Stuber talked about. Some of my own ancestors were "farmed out" to earn money to help support the family. Their stories and Iris's stories bear distinct similarities. I love this book.

As a first-time author of a youth novel, Barbara Stuber has shown that she knows how to write a fascinating story. Every chapter takes the reader around another intriguing bend in the tracks. It's tough to put down! The main character, Iris, has spunk and tenacity and is inspiring to girls and women of any age. In a word, get this book-- for your daughter, your sister, your friend, even your mother!

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