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# Belle Prater's Boy



## Synopsis

When Belle Prater disappears, Belle's boy, Woodrow, comes to live with his grandparents in Coal Station, Virginia. Woodrow's cousin Gypsy is the town beauty, but she has hidden sorrows and secrets of her own. She wonders how Woodrow can accept his mother's disappearance when she's never gotten over her father's death. That's when Woodrow tells Gypsy the secret about his mother. From the Trade Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

There's a mystery at the heart of this lyrical novel for young adults: what really happened to Belle Prater, the aunt of 12-year-old Gypsy Arbutus Leemaster? When Gypsy's cousin, Belle's son Woodrow, comes to live in tiny Coal Station, Virginia, he sets off a chain of events that precipitates a solution to this enigma, as well as the mystery of Gypsy's own father's death seven years earlier. Ruth White's characters, particularly the cross-eyed, brilliant Woodrow, are sharply drawn, and the small-town life of rural Virginia is wonderfully described. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Returning to the early '50s, western Virginia setting of Sweet Creek Holler and Weeping Willow, White serves up a novel so fresh that readers can practically smell the lilacs and the blossoming fruit trees. Gypsy, the 12-year-old narrator, is all excited when her cousin Woodrow moves in with their grandparents next door-Woodrow's mother, married to a coal miner in a remote holler, has

disappeared without a trace, and Gypsy hopes that Woodrow will divulge some new clues. Instead, she gets a best friend, someone who, in spite of unwelcome attention for having crossed eyes and being "Belle Prater's boy," charms everyone in school with his good-natured if mischievous wit. Gypsy cannot understand Woodrow's self-possession in the wake of his mother's desertion, but Woodrow, on the other hand, understands Gypsy's pain at her father's long-ago suicide better than Gypsy does. Pitching her narrative in a genial, mountain-folks twang, White creates vivacious, memorable characters whose openheartedness should not be mistaken for naivete. She gives her protagonists the courage to face tragedy and transcend it-and the ability to pass along that gift to the reader. Ages 12-up. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

This book was recommended to me by a fifth grade teacher who uses it in her classroom in Lithia, FL. As an adult reader, I was surprisingly pulled in by this story of 1954 rural Virginia and the way life was at that time. The story is built around the mystery of the disappearance one night of a family member (Belle Prater) including the build up to that event and the results afterwards. This book offers many thought provoking questions for young and old alike. In fact, I liked it Belle Prater's Boy enough to read the follow on book about what happens to this family. This is an easy read good book for adults. It is a very good book for young adults.

This is a touching story with a surprisingly mature plot for a book written for ages 10-11. The two main characters, cousins, are trying to deal with loss - one the death her father and the other the disappearance of his mother. Both feel like social outcasts and like they have been abandoned by the adult most important to them. I so appreciate an author who respects adolescents and children enough to write such a human story that thousands of children will be able to relate to and thousands more may learn some empathy from reading such a moving story.

This book was a wonderful read. I am an elementary school counselor & decided to read this book because my sixth-graders are reading it in class. Their teacher knew that some of the students might have questions dealing with death and suicide. It is the first book I have read by Ruth White but it will not be the last! It is very well written and she deals with the subjects of death and suicide in a very sensitive way. I like the theme throughout the book of not judging people by what you see on the outside but by getting to know what's on the inside.

I really enjoyed this book, even though I am far from the age of the young people in this book. I live very near the book's setting, and that added quite a bit of enjoyment for me. The plot was believable, and had a fairly high ring of possible truth to it. Personally, I liked the implied message in the whole book, and a lot of grownups could do well to heed the message.

This book was given to my daughter to read who is nine for school, I think it's a bit depressing and sad for a kid who really needed a pick me up after experience with tragedy of her own. Not cool Lackland Isd!

Aside from its intriguing plot, what I loved about this book was that Ruth White gave a true picture of life in southwest Virginia in the 1950's. I grew up there in the 1940's and 50's, not so far from Coal Station (Grundy). It was wonderful to see my native speech, the southwest Virginia vernacular, so accurately presented by a native of the area.

This tale is so rich with cultural language. It pulls the reader in with a plot that show realistic life issues kids can identify with. I thoroughly recommend it especially to kids who are forced into life's situations they did not choose.

I purchased this book because it's setting is actually the little town of Grundy Virginia. As well as written by one of our own. What a treasure I've discovered!!! I absolutely love this little book and am sure I'll read it many times over the years. You won't want to pass up this little gem.

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