



The Cybil War

Betsy Byars

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Young love, told by the Newbery Medal-winning author of Summer of the Swans

Simon is in fifth grade, and every time he sees Cybil Ackerman, his heart pounds. Falling in love with her was easy, but winning her is not. Simon's best friend, Tony, is also swooning over Cybil, and he'll stop at nothing to ruin Simon's chances of impressing her. When Simon realizes what Tony is up to, the war is on... but only Cybil can decide the outcome. Who will be the lucky winner of Cybil's heart?

"Young love, fifth-grade variety, portrayed with warmth and humor and that extra, penetrating touch one expects of Byars."—Kirkus Reviews

An ALA Notable Book

The Cybil War Details

Date : Published April 1st 1990 by Puffin Books (first published July 1st 1981)

ISBN : 9780140343564

Author : Betsy Byars

Format : Paperback 128 pages

Genre : Childrens, Fiction, Realistic Fiction, Young Adult, Middle Grade

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From Reader Review The Cybil War for online ebook

Lisa Williams says

The Cybil War is a story about two best friends who are confident and cool until a new girl moves in and throws them off their game. The boys have given accurate nicknames to the students in their school but they can't seem to come up with an accurate nickname for the new girl. She's different than anyone else they know. Before they know it, both boys are in love with her and vying for her attention. It all comes to a head at a school performance. Who will get the girl? Will the boys still be best friends when this all gets settled? Find out in Betsy Byars's middle-grade novel about life and love and friendship.

Natalia says

This is unremarkable short story about a school crush. My boys are not into books like this and neither am I, so it was kept untouched in my home library for a long time. Recently, I decided to donate some books to my kids school, so before giving it away I wanted to read it to form an opinion and make sure I'm not giving away some hidden gem of a book. From the first few chapters I saw it is just another quick chapter book for elementary school kids- kind of read and forget variety. I'm sure it will be okay for elementary and lower middle school age kids.

mitchell k dwyer says

Simon has been in love with Cybil for three years, but now his best friend Tony seems to have his heart set on Cybil too. Tony, a loud, crude, habitual liar thinks that the best way to get a girl's attention is to insult her physical appearance and then claim to be repeating what Simon has said in private. This puts Simon in uncomfortable positions and leads to the Cybil War, an undeclared battle for the attention and affection of Cybil.

It's a good story, ringing with a quiet truth rare to find in novels aimed at middle elementary-schoolers. Byars never condescends. She allows her character to proclaim his love for a classmate and then she reminds us of what that felt like at that age. There's more to this story, because Byars develops her characters well. The reason Tony and Simon are friends in the first place, we discover, is that they have something very sad in common. We root against Tony and when Simon gets angry at his behavior, we get angry right along with him, but Byars doesn't let us think of him only in two-dimensional terms.

The book is a short 126 pages and a quick read, but it is a deep 126 pages. There's a lot to discuss here with young readers who are lucky enough to discover it. I regret that I was 40 before I got to read it, but am pleased to have read it now. Highly recommended. Thanks, Cindy!

Patrick says

Cute little 5th grade love story I found in my stack of old books from home. I like Betsy Byars, but I had

Rob Ryann says

Bob 123 says

Because this book is by Betsy Byars, I expected it to be well-written, and I was not disappointed. I was also pleasantly surprised when I realized the book is still in print and available as an e-book! It's one of the few

books about love that can appeal to boys or girls - and maybe even more to boys, given the male friendship at the center of the plot. The cover could use an update, but otherwise, I think the story is a perfect choice for fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders who are taking their first tentative steps toward finding love.

Siwon k says

A book about friendship, a great story!
although Simon's friend Tony was quite mean and self-fish

Lavinia says

I was in the Young People Library with my kids when I ran across this book I had read in 4th grade. I remember it being a fast and fun read not only about boys who have a crush on the same girl, but about a boy dealing with the absence of his father. I think the author does a great job integrating humor into potentially sad stories. I also like her other books, "Summer of the Swans" and "The Pinballs"

Oona says

a good book to re-read, and recollect what it was about...

Emily says

3.5 interesting. Was not really a war but more like a fight over the girl. Very quick and easy for good readers. I thought that it was a little weird to make a book that was all over a girl..... Then again I picked this one up cause Brayers is one of my favorite authors. Was not THAT impressed-- sorry Betsy

Yvonne says

Absolutely loved this book when I was a child. A great pre-coming-of-age story about a boy dealing with an absentee father, a first crush, and a best friend who may not be much of a friend after all. Can't wait to read this to my children some day.

Shelli says

Sweet read about first love and friendship. Simon has been in love with Cybil since the second grade but has noticed recently that his best friend Tony has been trying to catch Cybil's eye. Tony plays dirty in the quest to earn Cybil's affection and Simon struggles with how to handle the situation. Simon is also dealing with his own sorrows of having a father that walked out on he and his mother for a "simpler life."

Ashley says

This is my 10 yr old little brother's favorite book. I get so excited that he loves to read! He kept talking about this one and how much he liked it, so I bought him a copy for his birthday. He asked me if I would like to read it too, so I did.

It was a cute little story about two best friends who like the same girl. The main character, Simon is a nice, likeable guy who seems to block himself in a little bit from the troubles of his life. His best friend, Tony, is a compulsive liar who tries to make trouble for Simon and Cybil. He makes up stories and does what he can to upset people in general, and basically tries to make life miserable for as many people as he can. It feels almost typical of kids that age (like 4th grade) but Tony seems pretty harsh, although that might be more because he is placed next to nice-guy Simon. At one point, a character is talking to Tony and calls him 'juvenile' and another comments that he will spend his whole life blaming the negative pieces on things outside of his control. 'It wasn't my fault, it's because the desk was unlucky' etc. I think that sums him up quite well.

I didn't much care for the way the characters were written. I believe I would have liked this book a lot more if I had read it when I was younger. The characters were all pretty flat. I felt like there were moments when Byars tried to add depth to the characters but it never really worked. It was a cute story for younger kids, but doesn't really hold up well for the older audience.
