



## Anastasia Krupnik

*Lois Lowry , Diane deGroat (Illustrator)*

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Ages 8-12. The first and best book in the very popular series describes the ups and downs of a precocious ten-year-old girl. Anastasia loves keeping lists of important information in her green notebook; when she discovers that her mother is pregnant, she instantly adds two new items to her "things I hate" list: "My parents" and "babies." But as the year passes, Anastasia finds that the items on her lists keep moving around; by the time her baby brother is born, the only thing left to hate is liver. An unusually warm, insightful and original portrait of childhood and family life, this is a special and memorable story. Horn Book called Anastasia "an amusing and engaging heroine" and The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books wrote, "the whole book is a delight."

## Anastasia Krupnik Details

Date : Published October 24th 1979 by HMH Books for Young Readers (first published November 30th 1978)

ISBN :

Author : Lois Lowry , Diane deGroat (Illustrator)

Format : Kindle Edition 114 pages

Genre : Childrens, Fiction, Young Adult, Middle Grade

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### Carrie says

So I read this book aloud to my daughter and I had to gloss over some areas. There is a part where she is talking about a guy she likes and she's telling her friend about what Cosmo magazine says about how you know you are in love, one of the points is wanting to fulfill his fantasy's, Anastasia is a ten year old. Despite being dated, letting her drink the foam from her father's beer, the mentioning of her dad drinking beer is something you don't see in many books today aimed at that age group, being home alone at 10. But there are other issues that no matter when the book was written it still hit home. The growing pains of being 10, finding out about a baby on the way and loss of a grandparent.

Both me and my daughter really enjoyed this book and this character, we hope the library has the next in the series.

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### Jess says

Rereading Anastasia is like revisiting a place that you didn't quite remember you'd been to, but as soon as you get there everything seems familiar. Mrs. Westvessel, Washburn Cummings, the lists, her mole, her changing relationship with her grandmother, her secret bad thoughts, her poetry outfit. It was all tucked away in some obscure part of my brain, waiting to be rediscovered. I reread the book a few years ago, for the first time since middle school, probably, and listening to it on audio brought back that same feeling.

I have to confess - I almost didn't keep going with the audio version. C.J. Critt does a great job of inhabiting the world of a ten-year-old, but she inserts these long pauses into the narrative as if waiting for a slow reader to follow along the page with her. This is downright annoying at first, especially when you can hear her inhaling, but fortunately I was stuck with it on a 40 minute drive and by the time I was a few tracks in, I was hooked. It's a short book and I listened to the whole thing in one day, what with a slightly longer drive home and listening while cooking dinner.

But what's so great about Anastasia and the way Lois Lowry tells her story? Simply that I believe Anastasia is a ten year old. She's on the edge of figuring out the world - what does she love and hate? How does she reconcile her interior world with reality? She has a life that was enough like mine for me to relate, but different enough to feel exciting. She's funny. She makes lists. Also, rereading as an adult, her parents seem awesome - fully fleshed-out characters that I wouldn't mind hanging out with.

Sure, there are a few dated things in the book - the college students smoking in class, her parents finding out they're having a boy after taking a special test, not because of an ultrasound, and a few other references, but Anastasia as a character doesn't date at all. It doesn't look like the rest of the series is available on audio through my library (or maybe at all), but I'm eager to reread the whole series and discover more bits I'd forgotten (I know there's a character named Lloyd later in the series because I distinctly remember someone insisting it be pronounced "Yoyd").

Source: my library

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### **Colin says**

Um, a precocious girl who writes in a notebook all the time, likes lists and poetry, and uses words like *jocund* and *indefatigable* after looking them up in the dictionary, keeping a list of her favorite words in said notebook? No wonder I loved this as a child. Also, the parents cuss and are blasé about it. I'm sure that delighted me as well.

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### **Jasmine says**

Just reread this. Such a delightful book, and even though it's copyrighted 1979, it barely feels dated. The only things that do feel dated is that there are things in it that would not fly in children's books today (like Anastasia's parents letting her have a sip of their wine or beer, or the wonderful name that she comes up with for her unborn brother, which I will not spoil because I forgot it and it made me laugh out loud when I got there).

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### **Manybooks says**

I really do not know why I did not read this particular Lois Lowry book (or the entire Anastasia Krupnik series for that matter) as a teenager, when the series was current, was just being published. I so love mature little Anastasia with a vocabulary better than mine and self-direction enough to make her own decisions and lists (which are also kept up-to-date). And her parents are equally wonderful, giving their daughter lots of space and consideration, even with the new baby coming (and yes, there is most definitely some personal envy speaking here, as my parents were not even remotely as understanding and yes, as forgiving and commiserative when I was Anastasia's age).

Now my very favourite part of Anastasia Krupnik is probably the sharing of the poem Anastasia had taken so much time writing. Her teacher actually had given her an F and explained that she had not followed directions, and I can definitely thus completely understand why this teacher originally ended up on Anastasia's hate-list. I guess I can though, to a point also realise and even appreciate that Anastasia did not follow the directions of the assignment (in so far that the poem was supposed to rhyme). But was that worth an F, a total failing grade which basically says that her efforts were both wrong and totally unacceptable? I mean, why did the teacher not give her at least a C; an F just seems mean spirited to the extreme. That being said, at the end of the novel, this very same teacher is actually revealed to be a genuinely nice and caring person (albeit one with perhaps not all that much imagination, but still a comiserative and genuinely nice individual and not a monstrosity worthy of hatred and ridicule).

And personally, I so appreciate that her father not only has Anastasia read her poem aloud to him, but that he loves her verses and is not afraid of telling Anastasia that her poem is indeed good (that the father is not above giving praise when and where praise was due). He also explains it is the teacher who cannot understand poetry (but in retrospect, I also like the fact that Dr. Krupnik is able to commend Anastasia's poetic effort without actually being nasty towards the teacher, that he strives to show his daughter that her teacher is not trying to be deliberately mean, but that she simply has a limited and limiting understanding of lyricism, of the fact that poetry does not have to mean rhyming couplets and the like). And I guess I should also perhaps admit that when I first read Anastasia Krupnik, my initial reaction (especially towards the scene where Anastasia shares her supposedly failed poem with her father and the fact that he is not only accepting

of her, but offers praise while also allowing himself to be openly critical of her teacher) was both intensely positive and congratulatory, but also one of serious and almost tearful envy (as my own parents would NEVER have acted this way, would ALWAYS have taken the part of the teacher in no uncertain terms, and were generally only interested in my endeavours and issues when there were issues, and potential problems, as parental praise was seen as promoting possible boastfulness).

Sadly, Anastasia Krupnik and actually the entire series, is a continuous resident on the list for frequently banned and challenged books in the USA, often because of the fact that curse words are used and presented. Now I really do not think that there is anything all that problematic about these so called four-letter words, as they are used realistically and are also not over and gratuitously used. And yes, a university student might well use these types of words and expressions in class, during a lecture, which is perhaps why Dr. Krupnik should probably not have taken Anastasia to visit his class (I teach at the university/college level and students do use inappropriate language at times, which is why the few times students have wanted to be able to take their children to class, I said that this was not such a good idea). If the swear words used in, featured in Anastasia Krupnik had been overused and gratuitous, I might have had somewhat more of an issue with this, but as it stands, they just make the narrative more realistic and immediate. And really, the idea of some "enlightened" parents wanting to ban, to remove this book (or the series) from library shelves etc. simply because curse words and references to alcohol consumption is presented, is simply and utter horrid (so what if off colour words are used, or that Anastasia's father drinks beer and lets her sip the foam, oh wow, how anal and silly these holier than thou book banners and book burners are, book banning and censorship is NEVER acceptable).

I guess I was and perhaps do even remain a bit shocked at the name Anastasia originally chose for her baby brother. I kind of naively thought it was going to be some kind of a complicated name like her own, such as Theophilus or perhaps some literary name she had read in a book, or had heard her parents discuss. And personally, at age ten, I would not even have known what it meant (and I will not reveal the actual name, as that would be a massive spoiler, except to say that it is rather sexual in nature and tone), and would also not have wanted to ask my parents what it meant (when I was ten, we had just moved to Canada from Germany, so I doubt that either of my parents would even have known what it meant any more than I would have; they knew English, but would not likely have known much vernacular and slang).

Finally, as someone with a rather odd and difficult to pronounce first name (Gundula), I can certainly much relate to Anastasia at the beginning of the novel not liking her name and actually having some major issues with the same. I personally love her name and that she was named for Anastasia Romanov (and I also much appreciate my own name now), but having a unique name can be a real hassle at school and can also lead to both inadvertent pronunciation issues (my teachers were constantly mispronouncing my name, but many of them did not at all like me telling them that) and actual bullying (Anastasia being left out of the "i" club in her class comes to mind, and I remember that at least some of the mispronunciations of my own name were deliberate, like Gondola instead of Gundula, and classmates telling me that I resembled the former).

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### **Rebecca McNutt says**

I enjoyed this book when I was ten years old myself. Now, not so much, but it's still a great coming-of-age novel that inspires young readers to get to know their elders before it's too late and to accept changes in the familiar family dynamics.

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### **Jerry says**

Despite being thirty years old, I often read juvenile chapter books; I find them entertaining and engaging. Even ones I read as a kid have held up when I reread them in recent years.

However, I did not care for this book.

Why? The main problem is the protagonist; she is too unlikable and whiny. She goes from liking things to hating them to liking them again; can't she make up her mind? Add to that a usage of the s-word and a sexual description of the Catholic sign of the cross--seriously!--and this was a dud.

The only reason I gave it two stars was because I liked the ending; however, I won't be reading any of the sequels.

(Why do these "classic" kids' books often end up being such garbage? We need a sleuth like Sherlock Holmes or Jessica Fletcher to investigate!)

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### **Maryellen says**

When I was around this age, I wanted to be Anastasia so much! She was cool. She wore glasses like me. She didn't understand boys, just like me. As the series continued, I loved how quirky and interesting she was. My favorite was Anastasia, Ask Your Analyst, in which she got a bust of Sigmund Freud and used him as an actual therapist. Completely genious. As someone who was often misunderstood, I could relate to Anastasia on a completely different level!

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### **Beth Bonini says**

My oldest daughter adored the Anastasia series when she was in late elementary school, but strangely enough, I've just read the first novel in its entirety. I love the character of Anastasia: she is wholly original, an independent thinker, but also a girl who realistically captures the emotionally "mercurial" state of being 10 years old. So many fictional girls of this age are precocious in the bratty, smart-aleck sense of the word, but Anastasia is pert in a more loveable and unique way.

Lowry is such an intelligent writer. She manages, with such grace, to touch on rather deep topics: love and memory, ageing and death, fear of change and other pangs of growing up. There is great charm in her writing, and I particularly liked Anastasia's parents (a poet and an artist) and the way that Anastasia's relationship with them is portrayed. A good read-aloud between mother and daughter, with a nice sprinkling of mother-only-will-appreciate-it moments.

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### **Sara Jane says**

I read this for my book club where we reread books we read when we were younger, but this was the first time I'd ever read it. I wish I'd read it when I was 10 because of great lines like this: "I need to start worrying

about making myself some memories" or this: "These are the most important things that happened the year that I was ten: I began to have a mercurial temperament." Or all of her wart references. This is such a smart, insightful book for kids, but I thoroughly enjoyed it, too.

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### **Carol says**

My 7-year-old just read this, so I had to pick it up and reread parts. It is even MORE awesome than I remembered. How I wish I were as cool a parent as Anastasia's parents.

Also, it inspired my daughter to write poetry. Terrible poetry, but still.

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### **Jessica says**

I haven't re-read this book since I was a child. Some thoughts:

- 1) As far as final lines go, "With mushrooms!" is a pretty great one.
- 2) I totally forgot how this book made me want to answer the phone by saying "For whom does this bell toll?" Ambition resumed.
- 3) I am feeling somewhat miffed that the sequels are not available on my library's streaming audio services. Were they even ever recorded? This is a truly unfortunate situation.

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### **Jenne says**

It's weird, I didn't really think of these books as that funny when I was a kid. Anastasia reminds me a lot of myself at that age, so I probably just thought it seemed normal.

But now! I was reading this at lunch and I had to stop because I kept laughing and my co-workers were staring at me.

For example:

*"Anastasia had a small pink wart in the middle of her left thumb. She found her wart very pleasing. It had appeared quite by surprise, shortly after her tenth birthday, on a morning when nothing else interesting was happening, and it was the first wart she had ever had, or seen.*

*"It's the loveliest color I've seen in a wart," her mother, who had seen others, said with admiration.*

*"Warts, you know," her father had told her, "have a kind of magic to them. they come and go without any reason at all, rather like elves."*

I love her parents (and how terrifying is it that her mother and I are now *the same age*?). They are hilarious and awesome.

Oh yeah, and then you might cry at the end part.

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### **SamZ says**

Anastasia is 10. She has a mom who is a painter and a dad who is a poet. She also has a wart on her thumb. She has a green notebook where she keeps her most important thoughts, her loves and hates, and cool new words. This is a story about what happens to Anastasia the year she is 10.

I loved this book, Anastasia was hilarious! I kind of wish I'd read this as a kid, because I loved the themes and thoughts of this precocious ten-year-old. I enjoyed it as an adult, though, because the writing flows so well and the emotions are so real. I also loved how Anastasia's feelings and dynamics changed throughout the story, especially in regards to her parents and her grandmother. Such a great story, I will likely pick up the second book in the series to see where it goes.

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### **Melinda says**

The rare re-read of a childhood favorite that **TOTALLY** lives up to my memories of reading it originally. I read this aloud to Sofie and she loved it too. Anastasia's family remains the coolest. And there is no way any middle grade book today would get away with that One Ball Reilly punchline. Or a poetry professor dad who smokes and swearing in class and lets his 10-yr-old sip the foam off his beer.

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