

Background about the Book – Welcome to Camden Falls

Flora and Ruby do not want to move to Camden Falls. But they don't really have a choice — their parents are dead and their grandmother, Min, is taking them in. It's strange to be in a new place. But luckily, it's a very welcoming place.

Min runs a sewing store, Needle & Thread, at the heart of Main Street in Camden Falls. There, Flora and Ruby become friends with Olivia, who likes to organize things, and Nikki, who lives on the wrong side of the tracks. Even if Flora and Ruby never expected it to, Camden Falls becomes their home . . . and its stories become a part of their stories.

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About the Author



Ann Mathews Martin was born on August 12, 1955. She grew up in Princeton, New Jersey, with her parents and her younger sister, Jane. After graduating from Smith College, Ann became a teacher and then an editor of children's books. She's now a full-time writer.

Ann gets the ideas for her books from many different places. Some are based on personal experiences, while others are based on childhood memories and feelings. Many are written about contemporary problems or events. All of Ann's characters, even the members of the Baby-sitters Club, are made up. But many of her characters are based on real people. Sometimes Ann names her characters after people she knows, and other times she simply chooses names that she likes.

Ann has always enjoyed writing. Even before she was old enough to write, she would dictate stories to her mother to write down for her. Some of her favorite authors at that time were Lewis Carroll, P. L. Travers, Hugh Lofting, Astrid Lindgren, and Roald Dahl. They inspired her to become a writer herself.

Since ending the BSC series in 2000, Ann's writing has concentrated on single novels, many of which are set in the 1960s.

Reviews – Welcome to Camden Falls

Booklist Review: In *Welcome to Camden Falls*, Flora and her younger sister, Ruby, recently orphaned, have come to live with their grandmother, Min, who co-owns a fabric shop in a New England town. The adjustment to life in Camden Falls is difficult, but the girls make new friends, and Flora finds solace as she gets more deeply into her hobby, sewing. Martin does some unusual things here, telling the story from several perspectives and filling it with modern-day problems, even as the feel of the book harkens back to an earlier time. An almost dizzying array of characters is introduced, including one neighbor who has Down syndrome, another who has Alzheimer's disease, and a third who is struggling with aging. A new friend must deal with a mother who drinks and a father who is abusive. Sometimes these problems overwhelm the story, but Martin's easy style, appealing characters, and obvious love of place will keep readers going. - *Cooper, Ilene* (Reviewed 08-01-2007) (*Booklist*, vol 103, number 22, p76)

Publishers Weekly Review: Martin launches her Main Street series with this appealing though somewhat sleepy tale, set in a small Massachusetts town. Eleven-year-old Flora and her younger sister, Ruby, whose parents died five months earlier in a car accident, come to live with their big-hearted grandmother, Min. Their new home is one of eight attached row houses, whose other residents include bright, brassy Olivia, who is Flora's age; an earnest teenage boy with Down syndrome; a pair of teenage sisters, one conscientious and kind, the other initially aloof and rebellious; and a patient, elderly man devoted to his wife, who suffers from dementia. Also playing supporting roles are a girl who lives in a run-down house on the edge of town, whose gruff, defensive veneer eventually cracks; and a mysterious older woman who does mending in Min's sewing store. A passionate needleworker, Flora relishes the hours she spends helping out and doing sewing projects in the shop. Readers may agree with Ruby—whose passion is dancing and singing—that time spent there is not all that lively. But Martin deftly reveals the novel's affecting underpinning—the girls' adjustment to their new life without their parents. Helping sensitive Flora with the transition is her discovery of her mother's diary and a box of old photos and letters, which helps her feel that indeed there "was a place for her in this room, in this house, in this town." The sisters begin school in their new town in *Needle and Thread*, due in August. Ages 9-12. (*May*) --*Staff* (Reviewed April 16, 2007) (*Publishers Weekly*, vol 254, issue 16,

Read Alikes – Welcome to Camden Falls

Buttermilk Hill by Ruth White

Becoming Naomi Leon by Pam Munoz Ryan

Permanent Rose by Hilary McKay

Kira-kira by Cynthia Kadohata

Fairy Tale Detectives by Michael Buckley

The Star of Kazan by Eva Ibbotson

Discussion Questions: Welcome to Camden Falls

1. Flora and Ruby do not want to move to Camden Falls but they do not have a choice. The girls are recently orphaned and their grandmother is taking them in. Have you ever had to move with your family? Discuss the difficulties and adjustments involved in moving?
2. Flora and Ruby have very different personalities and interests. Flora enjoys sewing and is quiet and introspective while Ruby loves performing and is outgoing. Which girl do you think has the harder time adjusting to their new environment? Why?
3. By the end of the book, Flora and Ruby have begun to adjust to their new home. What changes and growth have you seen in them? Have their relationships with other characters changed? Have their personalities and attitudes changed?
4. Who is your favorite Main Street character and why? Do any Main Street characters remind you of you and your friends? In what ways?
5. Why are Flora and Ruby afraid of Main Street neighbor, Mary Woolsey? Does she really deserve the reputation of “Scary Mary?” Are any other Main Street characters very different from how they first appear?
6. If you could choose one store on Main Street to work at, which store would it be?

GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions can be applied to any book. You can tweak the questions for your specific book. They can be cut into strips and passed around in a basket to help facilitate discussion.

My favorite part of the book was...

A better title for this book would be...because...

(Name of character) reminds me of myself because...

My least favorite character was...because...

If I were (name of character, -----) I would (wouldn't) have...

(Name of character) reminds me of someone I know because...

I changed my mind about...because...

I would (wouldn't) like to read another book by this author because...

This book made me think...When I finished this book, I still wondered...

This book reminded me of...

I'd like to tell the author...

What happened in this book was very realistic (unrealistic) because...

This book was better (worse) than the movie version because...

When I started reading his book, I thought...

I didn't like...because...

This book made me realize...

If I could talk to (name of character), I would say...

One thing I have noticed about the author's style is...

If I could be any character in the book I would be...because...

I was surprised when...

I think the main thing the writer was trying to say was...

The most important thing about this book is...

I predicted that...

I think the writer must be ...because...

I would change the ending...