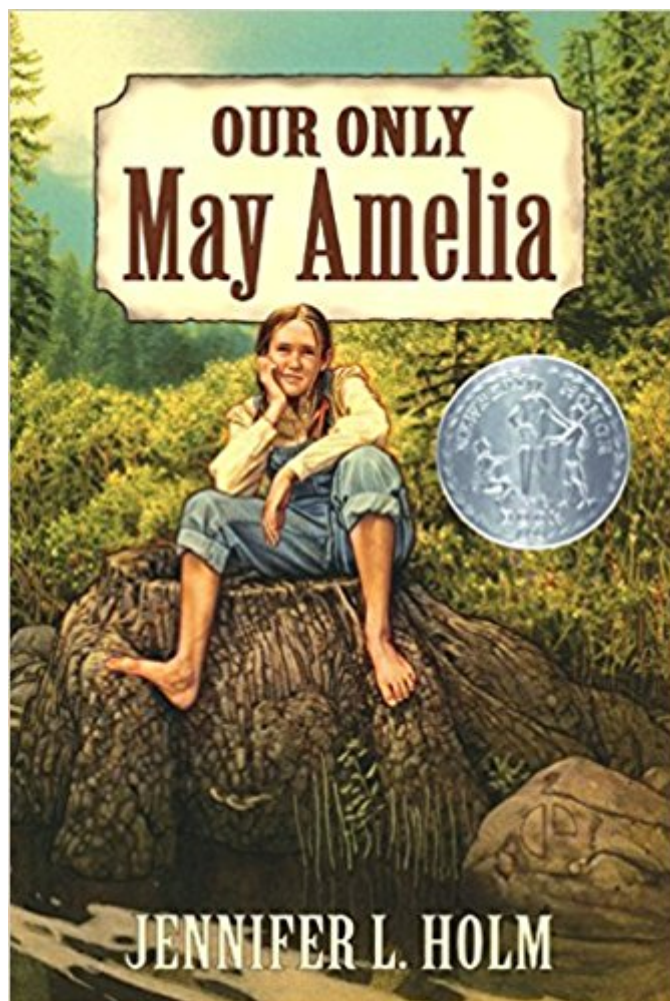


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# Our Only May Amelia (Harper Trophy Books (Paperback))



## Synopsis

It isn't easy being a pioneer in the state of Washington in 1899, but it's particularly hard when you are the only girl ever born in the new settlement. With seven older brothers and a love of adventure, May Amelia Jackson just can't seem to abide her family's insistence that she behave like a Proper Young Lady. She's sure she could do better if only there were at least one other girl living along the banks of the Nasel River. And now that Mama's going to have a baby, maybe there's hope. Inspired by the diaries of her great-aunt, the real May Amelia, first-time novelist Jennifer Holm has given us a beautifully crafted tale of one young girl whose unique spirit captures the courage, humour, passion and depth of the American pioneer experience.

~—Newbery Honour Book (USA), 2000 Ages 10+

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 900 (What's this?)

Series: Harper Trophy Books (Paperback)

Paperback: 272 pages

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Language: English

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 121 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #64,045 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #92 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1800s #250 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States #374 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Siblings

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Twelve-year-old May Amelia is too busy chasing sheep, fishing for salmon, and keeping pace with the antics of her seven Finnish brothers to bother wearing a dress or scrubbing behind her ears. Unfortunately, she's being pressured to clean up her act. "It seems like everyone is conspiring to make me a Proper Young Lady," she observes in frustration. "I do not think being a proper Young

Lady sounds like any fun at all." The old-fashioned language in this historical novel seems strained at times, and the quirky use of capital letters is an unnecessary distraction, but this book is still a lot of fun. Why? For one thing, the story is set in the far, untamed reaches of the West at the turn of the 20th century, and offers encounters with Chinook Indians, dark forests, and the twists and turns of the Nasel River. And then there is May Amelia--as headstrong as rushing water, and the only female born on this stretch of the river since her family can remember. She is known (when she's not deep into trouble) as the Miracle. Will this feisty female ever settle down and become the little lady everyone expects her to be? Will her pregnant mother give birth to another girl so May Amelia can finally have a sister? You'll have to read the whole story to find out. (Ages 10 and older) --Maria Dolan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

An unforgettable heroine narrates Holm's extraordinary debut novel set in Washington State in 1899. Twelve-year-old tomboy May Amelia Jackson, the youngest of seven children and the only girl in a Finnish immigrant family, lives in the wilderness along the Nasel River: "I have so many brothers, more than any girl should have. My secret birthday wish is to get a sister." Holm's uncanny ability to give each of the siblings a distinctive character while maintaining May Amelia's spunky narrative voice, gives the novel its immediacy and potency. Through May Amelia's travels, readers witness the diverse ways of life in the expanding West: peaceful relations with the Chinook Indians, the plight of a widow barmaid, the taboos around her brother's interest in an Irish girl, the dangers posed by the neighboring logging camp, her aunt's life in the nearby boomtown of Astoria, Ore., as well as the rhythms of the seasons. The sometimes gruesome realities of the Jacksons' lives are tempered by May's strength of character and her bond to her favorite brother, Wilbert. Readers will fall in love with May Amelia's spirited nature; when she saves her brothers from a cougar, she tells them, "I reckon it's a Darn Good Thing I'm not a Proper Young Lady or you'd be a cougar's supper right about now." This novel is not to be missed. Ages 9-up. (June) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

May Amelia Jackson is a twelve year old girl with seven brothers, who lives with her family on the banks of the Nasel River in Washington state. Her parents came to America and settled in a small community of mostly Finnish speaking immigrants. May Amelia and her brothers attend a small school where they are learning to speak, read, and write the English language. The year is 1899, and May Amelia is an overall wearing tomboy who is constantly trying to prove that she can do

anything as good as her brothers can do. They live on a farm raising crops, sheep, and a few cattle. May Amelia is more at home mucking out the barn, then wearing a dress or doing women's work. Her brothers call her a miracle baby because she is the only girl born in this small community. However, May Amelia's hardworking mother is with child, and May Amelia's greatest wish is for a baby sister. May Amelia's father is a stern man, who is constantly angry and nagging about May Amelia's need to try to act like a young lady. When her father's even sterner and disagreeable mother moves in with the family, the family situation becomes harder to bear as more hardships are heaped on May Amelia and her mother by her ornery grandmother. This book gives a fresh look of a Finnish community, their traditions, family interactions, and the role of the extended family of immigrants as they adjust to living in America. May Amelia is a lively, spirited young girl who is always seeking adventures. In a time when the role of women was as a homemaker, a spirited young girl was sure to create clashes and challenges in a house of strong characters. This is a memorable book, with the highs and lows of life for a young girl in a hardworking family, trying to make a living when poverty was the norm and not the exception. Yet, this book is also centered on family dynamics, and the love and strength that comes from a close family bond. This is a book that I will be thinking about for a long time to come.

Can't remember why I originally had the sequel *The Trouble with May Amelia*, on my to-read list; but I always put off reading it because I wanted to start with the first book, this one, and it's not available on kindle. Then I got prime and that meant free shipping and the paperback was pretty reasonable so I got it and here I am finally finished reading a book I intended to read in Aug 2011. Isn't that fascinating? I thought so. Likes: I immediately fell in love with May. I love her voice and her brightness and sweetness and awesomeness. I loved her liberal use of capitalization. I loved her seven brothers, even eventually ornery ol Kaarlo. It was a fascinating glimpse into a history I had no idea existed; a 1899 settlement in Washington state. There was an interesting cast of characters, mostly May's family, but a few neighbors as well. Life in that time was difficult and scary, but seeing everything through the spicy tom-boy May Amelia's point-of-view was great. I particularly loved the family dynamics. All the love and rivalry, and seeing what May saw but interpreting it differently as a parent than she did as a 12 year old. She thought her Pa was mean and hated her while I could easily see how much he adored her and was trying to protect her from a difficult and dangerous world. It never occurred to May, which is very childlike and I think authentic. Dislikes: None to mention, but there is a very sad part that might be disturbing to some readers. Is it standard to make children cry (*Old Yeller*, *Where the Red Fern Grows*, *the Yearling*, etc)? I guess it Teaches You A

Lot About Life.

Great

While agreeing with all the positive comments of the other reviewers, I'd like to recommend the \*audiobook\* version of this wonderful story. Emmy Rossum's reading has just the right ring of tomboyish flair and derring-do, while managing to also convey a tremendous heart. (Ms. Rossum was spot-on perfect in the film "Song Catcher" and added important layers in it just as she does to this book. I mark her as an interpreter to watch.) Using her voice so artfully, "our only" May Amelia begins to win her way into our hearts. What an unforgettable character. Rossum's pacing and idiosyncratic turns of speech seem unselfconsciously natural, and her authentic-sounding rising vocal inflections paint indelible word pictures in the mind. Although a rebellious rascal, May Amelia is actually behaving in the only way open to a curious, intelligent, imaginative girl in turn-of-the-century Northwest. This kind of character, as May Amelia, will forever live in the voice of Ms. Rossum, to me. I could even detect flavorings of the woman she (the character) would become. Whatever problems a reader might have with the misspellings and quirky typography of the printed version, this audiobook will naturally overcome. Makes it a perfect choice for problem readers, to get them interested in books and hooked on their imaginations. Also great as a travel companion on long trips. Importantly, the audiobook is an unabridged version of this captivating historical, semiautobiographical (based on real diaries) novel, with an afterword by the author in her own voice.

My students love all of Jennifer Holm's books. Her characters are well developed and sympathetic. The stories are authentic and unique. This one is a particular favorite of my 6th grade girls.

An award-winning classic that gives a genuine feel for the pioneer life in the "Little Finland" of the Pacific Northwest. Characterization is deftly handled, and the narrative moves well, with no stumbling. This story could easily have been swamped by an overly sentimental treatment, but the author avoided this with deft, realistic depictions.

Our only May Amelia. Was so good. My favorite part was baby girl Amy Alice !!!!! Thought it was so sad that she died!

Now here is what I'm talking about strong girl character doesn't fit in and doesn't give a darn about it.

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