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Wait Till Helen Comes: A Ghost Story



Synopsis

Twelve-year-old Molly and her ten-year-old brother, Michael, have never liked their seven-year-old stepsister, Heather. Ever since their parents got married, she's made Molly and Michael's life miserable. Now their parents have moved them all to the country to live in a house that used to be a church, with a cemetery in the backyard. If that's not bad enough, Heather starts talking to a ghost named Helen and warning Molly and Michael that Helen is coming for them. Molly feels certain Heather is in some kind of danger, but every time she tries to help, Heather twists things around to get her into trouble. It seems as if things can't get any worse. But they do—when Helen comes.

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

Customer Reviews

Grade 4-7 Ghost story fans have a spooky treat in store with Hahn's eerie new novel. Molly, the 12-year-old narrator, and her brother Michael dislike their bratty 5-year-old stepsister Heather and resent the family move to an isolated converted church in the country. The adjourning graveyard frightens Molly, but Heather seems drawn to it. Molly discovers that the ghost of a child (Helen) who died in a fire a century ago wants to lure Heather to her doom. Molly determines to save her stepsister. In so doing, she learns that Heather's strange behavior stems from her feelings of guilt at

having accidentally caused her mother's death by playing near a stove and starting a fire.

Eventually, Molly wrests Heather from Helen's arms as the ghost attempts to drown them. The girls discover the skeletons of Helen's parents, and their burial finally puts to rest Helen's spirit. This is a powerful, convincing, and frightening tale. The details of everyday life quickly give way to terror. The pace never slackens. Characterization is strong, and descriptive passages set a mood of suspense. There should be a heavy demand from readers who are not "faint at heart." Judy Greenfield, Rye Free Reading Room, N.Y. Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc.

* "A ghost story par excellence in which a difficult seven-year-old is drawn into a frightening relationship with the ghost of a dead child." *Booklist*, starred review "Genuinely scary, complete with dark secrets from the past, unsettled graves, and a very real ghost." *The Bulletin* "An unusually scary, well-crafted ghost fantasy." *Kirkus Reviews*

This book grabs the reader from the first chapter where we meet first the mom and her two children (Molly and Michael), and then the husband's child (Heather) and then the husband. I don't know how the author did it, but Heather, comes across as a creepily hateful, troublemaking antagonist from the moment we meet her. Each character is drawn vividly and we are instantly experiencing the story along with the children. It is a good ghost story for younger readers, probably great in 1986, but the ending (at least now-a-days) is pretty predictable. I have a whole other ending in my head, much creepier, I think. This might be a good project for students, write an alternate ending and see what they come up with. I believe there was some confusion as to the ages of Molly and Heather, as in some places in the book Molly seemed so much younger than 12 and in other places, Heather seemed so much older than 7. In terms of what they said, the words used, and how and when they said it. [Molly: "You don't understand, Mom! I threw myself at her, trying to climb into her lap."] Also, some of the tags used would be absolute no-no's today: [Heather: "Do you believe in Helen now?" she hissed. (you can't hiss words). "I told you she'd make you sorry! The next time it will be much, much worse. You just wait!"] I do love the author's descriptions as she always invites many senses: "A breeze shushed through the grass, rustling the leaves and bringing with it the scent of honeysuckle. The night seemed very still and private." Still may creep out younger readers.

This was among my FAVORITE books when I was a child. I first read it when I was about seven years old after my librarian recommended this one due to the fact she knew I loved ghost stories. Then, two years later I was overjoyed when I got to read it again in school! I will give only a brief synopsis. The story concerns bookish 12-year-old Molly and her younger aspiring scientist brother moving to the Maryland countryside with her mother, stepfather, and stepsister. Unfortunately, their stepsister is a huge brat and Molly finds it difficult to get along with her. Making the family somewhat tense. They move into an old church where there is a graveyard behind, and it seems the stepsister becomes entranced by a ghost there. Nobody believes Molly and the terror begins. A genuinely terrifying book with lots of beautiful descriptions of the Maryland countryside and even in adulthood, I still consider this one of my favorite books. I absolutely cannot WAIT for the movie! Hopefully it stays faithful to the book. Cannot recommend this book enough!

Twelve-year-old Molly isn't happy that her mom has remarried, and she's even less thrilled when her new blended family moves to an old converted church far out in the country. The graveyard behind the church frightens Molly, but her new stepsister, 7-year-old Heather, is strangely drawn to it. Molly soon discovers that Heather's imaginary friend, Helen, isn't quite so imaginary. Helen is the ghost of a drowned girl, and she may be leading Heather to the same fate...unless Molly can stop her. I read this book for the first time when I was 9 or 10, and I probably read it at least 20 times in the 3 or 4 years that followed. I recently read it again as an adult, and I was so happy to discover that a book I loved so much when I was growing up has withstood the test of time. Aside from a few dated references, *Wait Till Helen Comes* feels timeless. It's an inventive, well-told, and eerie ghost story. Hahn's writing is age-appropriate, but doesn't feel "dumbed down" in the least; the writing is fantastic, actually. Her prose is beguiling, weaving an atmosphere that is rich with detail and rife with tension. You can feel the oppression of a stifling summer day, just as you can feel the chill of an otherworldly presence. As a pre-teen, I remember feeling truly chilled by some of the spookier scenes, and I'm not too proud to admit that some of those scenes still haunt me to this day (in particular, the scene in which Helen trashes Molly's and Michael's rooms and their mother's art studio, as well as the climax at Harper Pond). What makes this novel such a great one for pre-teens, though, is not necessarily that it's a ghost story. The relationships and issues that Hahn explores in *Wait Till Helen Comes* also lend to its timeless quality: the dynamics of a blended family, the nature of forgiveness and acceptance...great lessons, all wrapped up in a spooky, well-written package.

Great book with an underlying theme of guilt, forgiveness and communication. Blended family moves into a creepy house that was formerly a church complete with a graveyard attached to the property. Realistic teens are uncomfortable with both their new stepdad and his strange and hostile daughter. Things start to get scary when Heather connects with a ghost who passed at her very own age.(seven years old). There is a lack of communication between the overwhelmed adults and the kids. The older daughter bravely tries to protect the younger, angry Heather and in the end they learn a valuable lesson. Great way to open a discussion about feeling safe enough to confide anything to your parents. Honesty is always the best policy. I would read it before I would let my child attempt it. It can be really scary.

I'm 37 and I remember kids reading this when I was in the fourth grade and kids loving it. For some reason I never read it, until now! Thats right! You're never too old! Okay it IS for kids but the story is good and the author really makes you just HATE the stepsister. Wow, its seriously so good even reading it for the first time as an adult and yes the brother is a really weak character but just ignore him, he's kind of useless. Also I love when author's include maps in the book and this author did that! I wish I could have read this as a kid!

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