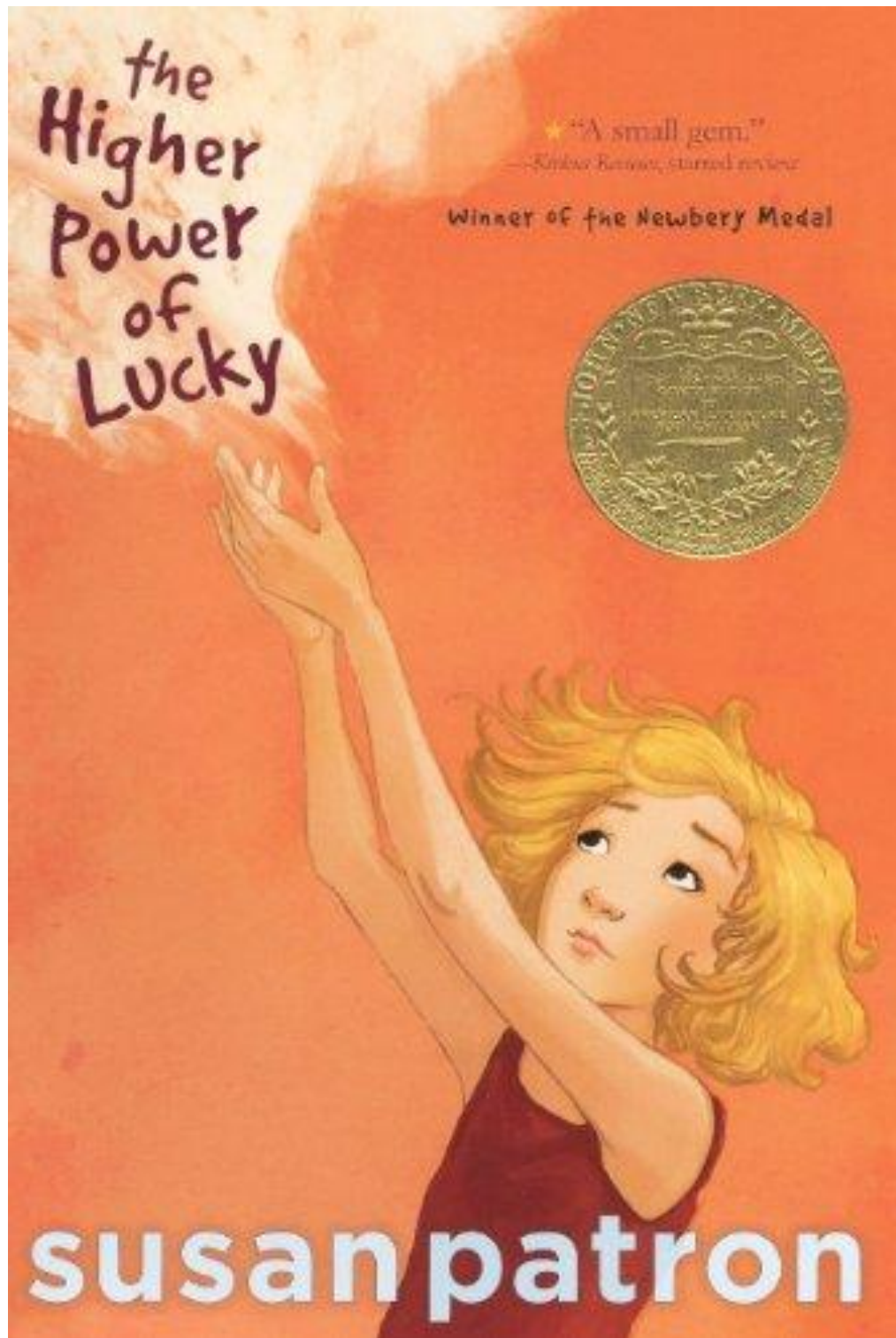


About the book...



Eavesdropping on the "anonymous" meetings in her small town, Lucky has heard a lot about higher powers and hopes she can find one for herself. Suspecting that her guardian, Brigitte, is planning to abandon her and return to France, Lucky decides to run away from home. Although it means leaving her dog, HMS Beagle, and her quirky friends Miles, the cookie addict, and Lincoln Clinton Carter Kennedy, whose hobby is knot tying, Lucky feels she has no choice but to take control of her life and find her higher power. She heads into the desert with her survival kit backpack and is soon struggling through a dangerous sandstorm. Will she make it through the desert? Will Brigitte decide to stay?

- Books & Authors

About the Author...



Susan Patron grew up in Los Angeles, California, the middle of three sisters and, as she commented, "a reader, dreamer, eavesdropper, washer of cars, shiner of shoes, mower of lawns, director of elaborate neighborhood plays, and teller of stories" who knew by the time she was eight that she wanted to be a writer. "Confiding this ambition to my father," said Patron, "I received both encouragement (go ahead: if you want to be a writer, write) and excellent advice (learn how to type). He also told me I wouldn't have to go far to find story ideas; all I had to do was keep my ears open. He was right. I began eavesdropping and hearing stories everywhere."

Patron spent her junior year of college in independent study at Trinity College, in Dublin, Ireland, listening to the "gowned professors as well as the cab drivers, the children, and the pub orators – the best extemporaneous talkers in the world." Back in the states, Patron was offered a job as children's librarian at the Los Angeles Public Library where she voraciously read children's literature, learned how to tell stories to

preschoolers and elementary school children, and created a project in which older adults were recruited and taught storytelling techniques.

"I hope that by sharing vividly remembered feelings from childhood in my stories, I will be giving readers or listeners a way of recognizing and articulating their own."

For more information, visit the author's website at <http://www.susanpatron.com/>

Selected Writings

- *The Hard Pan Series*
 - [*Lucky Breaks*](#), illustrated by Matt Phelan, Antheneum (NY), 2010.
 - [*Lucky for Good*](#), illustrated by Matt Phelan, Antheneum (NY), 2012.
- [*Maybe Yes, Maybe No, Maybe Maybe*](#), Aladdin (NY), 2009.
- [*Dear America: Behind the Masks*](#), Scholastic (NY), 2012.

[*The Higher Power of Lucky*](#) was awarded the 2007 Newbery Medal.

Reviews

Booklist

Lucky, age 10, lives in tiny Hard Pan, California (population 43), with her dog and the young French woman who is her guardian. With a personality that may remind some readers of Ramona Quimby, Lucky, who is totally contemporary, teeters between bravado--gathering insect specimens, scaring away snakes from the laundry--and fear that her guardian will leave her to return to France. Looking for solace, Lucky eavesdrops on the various 12-step meetings held in Hard Pan (of which there are plenty), hoping to suss out a "higher power" that will see her through her difficulties. Her best friend, Lincoln, is a taciturn boy with a fixation for tying knots; another acquaintance, Miles, seems a tiresome pest until Lucky discovers a secret about his mother. Patron's plotting is as tight as her characters are endearing. Lucky is a true heroine, especially because she's not perfect: she does some cowardly things, but she takes pains to put them to rights.

Horn Book

Ten-year-old Lucky lives in Hard Pan, California, a tiny enclave on the outskirts of the Mojave Desert. Her legal guardian is beautiful, melancholy Frenchwoman Brigitte, the first wife of Lucky's absentee father. Lucky is one of few people in her

community of forty-three to have a paying job in town, cleaning up after various "Anonymous" meetings held at the Found Object Wind Chime Museum and Visitor Center. As she eavesdrops on the participants' stories of redemption, she wonders how to find her own "higher power." When Lucky becomes convinced that Brigitte is planning to go back to France, her cathartic running-away into a desert windstorm allows her to come to terms with her mother's death, as well as prove to herself a compassion she's afraid she lacks. Author Patron's tale of a grieving, insecure little girl is never heavyhanded or maudlin, due in part to quiet bursts of humor. Quirky supporting characters include future presidential hopeful and knot artist Lincoln Clinton Carter Kennedy, Lucky's best friend; and recovering alcoholic/hippie/cowboy Short Sammy. The book's brief chapters reflect the cyclical, episodic nature of life in Hard Pan, while meandering yet meticulously crafted sentences illustrate Lucky's natural curiosity and the importance of storytelling in her life. Patron's sensory descriptions of Hard Pan and the surrounding desert, supported by

Phelan's gentle spot art, animate this unique community.

Kirkus Reviews

The facts of Lucky's life in Hard Pan, Calif. (population 43), scarcely qualify her as "lucky." One parent is dead and the other disinterested. Her future with her unemployed French guardian Brigitte, who was tricked into caring for her, feels uncertain. When Lucky discovers that Brigitte is taking an online course in restaurant management from Paris, she anticipates being abandoned. To find her higher power and take control of her life, Lucky runs away in a dust storm, hoping to cause worry, sadness and a change of Brigitte's heart. Potential disaster leads to Lucky's discovery that Brigitte loves her, which helps her come to terms with her mother's death. The plot is not what elevates Lucky's memorable story. Hard Pan may be lightly populated, but every soul is uniquely unforgettable, from 5-year-old Miles, shameless cookie hustler, to Lincoln, serious knot-tying addict. Readers will gladly give themselves over to Patron, a master of light but sure characterization

and closely observed detail. A small gem. (*Fiction. 9-11*)

Discussion Questions

(<https://multcolib.org/higher-power-lucky>)

1. Do you think Lucky lives up to her name? How is Lucky lucky? Why did the author decide to name her main character Lucky?
2. The author chose a desert setting for the book. How would the story be different if she had decided to have Lucky live in the mountains or near the ocean?
3. Among the things Lucky carries in her survival kit backpack are mineral oil, a book, specimen boxes, pencil and notebook, ketchup packets, can of beans, toothbrush and toothpaste, water, and a survival blanket. What do you think of her choices? What would you carry in a survival kit?
4. Her mother is dead and her father doesn't want children. Who is Lucky's family? What do you think the author is saying about families?
5. Lincoln is always tying knots from discarded string no one else wants and gives Lucky a ten-

strand round knot, a knot with no loose cord ends that might unwind. What does the knot represent to Lucky?

6. Lucky is all set to runaway, but "Then for no reason she got a sudden exploding idea. She rushed to Brigitte's trailer and flung open the closet." From the closet, Lucky takes Brigitte's red silk dress. Why?
7. After the dust storm, when the adults come looking for Lucky, Miles, and Lincoln, why does Lucky decide that is the right time to open the urn with her mother's ashes?
8. Lucky feels like she has no control over her own life since she's only 10. Do you ever feel frustrated about not having control over something?
9. Lucky eavesdrops on the meetings to find out how the anonymous people inside got control of their lives through their Higher Power but nobody ever explains how they found their Higher Power. Does Lucky find her higher power? What is it?

Activities

Collect interesting objects in your home or on a walk in your neighborhood then use them to make a wind chime that might be displayed in Hard Pan's Found Object Wind Chime Museum.

Learn more about knot-tying from the International Guild of Knot Tyers:

<http://www.igkt.net>

Read-Alikes

Kate DiCamillo, [*Because of Winn-Dixie*](#) (2000)

Ten-year-old India Opal Buloni's father sends her to the grocery store to get some macaroni and cheese. In the store, she encounters a very happy dog, causing a big mess and about to get in a lot of trouble. She pretends the dog belongs to her to save him from the pound, naming him after the store (Winn-Dixie) on the spur of the moment.

When she brings Winn-Dixie home, Opal's father, a preacher, immediately recognizes him as one of the Less Fortunate, and allows Opal to keep him. That summer, Opal and her father move to Naomi, Florida, where Winn-Dixie helps her to make some unusual new friends.

Katherine Hannigan, [*Ida B. . . and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and \(Possibly\) Save the World*](#) (2004)

Ever since a disastrous two weeks and three days in kindergarten, Ida B. has been home schooled. This set-up suits her just fine: Ida B.'s inquisitive and Mama always has time to answer her questions. The best part about being at home is the apple orchard, several acres at the back of the Applewoods' land where Ida B. knows every tree, and even carries on conversations with some of them. Then Mama discovers a lump in her breast that is diagnosed as cancer, and Ida B.'s life changes dramatically. She has to go back to school. There she rebels against her teacher, who patiently works with her new, and often difficult, student. Worst of all is that Mr. Applewood plans to sell the orchard to help pay for medical expenses. Can Ida B. find any solace in her changing world?

Polly Horvath, [*Everything on a Waffle*](#) (2001)

Primrose's mother sails out into a summer storm in search of her fisherman husband who is late returning home; when neither returns, the

townspeople assume they've died and that Primrose is now an orphan. However, Primrose doesn't assume that, even though she is the only one convinced her parents are fine and will return home when they're rescued. Until that happens, however, she first stays with her neighbor Miss Perfidy who bills the Squarps' bank account for baby-sitting Primrose. When Primrose's Uncle Jack comes to town, she moves in with him, though that move proves dangerous when she accidentally loses a little toe and then the tip of her finger. Her guidance counselor Miss Honeycutt, who's perhaps more interested in Uncle Jack than in Primrose, is convinced she's in danger and sends her to stay with older, foster parents. Though Primrose's life seems jumbled, she always has the comfort of visiting Miss Bowzer, who owns the restaurant called The Girl on the Red Swing, where everything is served atop a waffle. In this delightfully funny book there's a recipe at the end of every chapter, including one for waffles!

Deborah Wiles, [*Each Little Bird That Sings*](#) (2005)
Ten-year-old Comfort Snowberger has attended 247 funerals--her family owns the local funeral home, after all. And even though Great-uncle

Edisto keeled over with a heart attack and Great-great-aunt Florentine dropped dead--just like that--six months later, Comfort knows how to deal with loss, or so she thinks. She's more concerned with avoiding her crazy cousin Peach and trying to figure out why her best friend, Declaration, suddenly won't talk to her. But life is full of surprises. And the biggest one of all is learning what it takes to handle them. In this heartfelt and quintessentially Southern coming-of-age novel, Comfort will charm young readers with her wit, her warmth, and her struggles as she learns about life, loss, and ultimately, triumph.



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