



## **A Season of Gifts**

*Richard Peck*

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**One of children's literature's most memorable characters returns in this Christmastime companion to the Newbery Medal-winning *A Year Down Yonder* and Newbery Honor-winning *A Long Way from Chicago*.**

The eccentric, larger-than-life Grandma Dowdel is back in this heart-warming tale. Set 20 years after the events of *A Year Down Yonder*, it is now 1958 and a new family has moved in next door: a Methodist minister and his wife and kids. Soon Grandma Dowdel will work her particular brand of charm on all of them: ten-year-old Bob Barnhart, who is shy on courage in a town full of bullies; his two fascinating sisters; and even his parents, who are amazed to discover that the last house in town might also be the most vital. As Christmas rolls around, the Barnhart family realizes that they've found a true home, and a neighbor who gives gifts that will last a lifetime.

## A Season of Gifts Details

Date : Published September 17th 2009 by Dial Books for Young Readers

ISBN : 9780803730823

Author : Richard Peck

Format : Hardcover 176 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Holiday, Christmas, Young Adult, Fiction, Humor, Childrens, Juvenile

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## **From Reader Review A Season of Gifts for online ebook**

### **Sandy says**

This book is the third and final book in the (very short) A Long Way from Chicago Series. It is a moderately funny little story but I can see why the series stopped at this point. The characters changed from the sister and brother who visited their grandmother, Mrs. Dowdel, in the first two books to a "new" family in town who lived next door to her. She was up to her old antics, which was amusing, but I missed the original characters and I found some of the "humour" wasn't really funny. There was a lot of bullying which, in this day, I don't feel should be presented to young people as humour.

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### **Patti says**

I was so anxious to read A Season of Gifts as the final episode after the hilariously entertaining A Long Way from Chicago and A Year Down Yonder. I even thought the picture on the front was delightful – but oh how the whole book left me baffled, and frankly disappointed.

It starts out with hijinks by the local bullies to the poor new kid, new neighbor of Grandma Dowdel. The Grandma Dowdel of “old” would have done something to avenge the obvious rotten bullies, leaving us laughing and having at least some dignity restored to the poor, humiliated new kid on the block. I kept waiting for Grandma to do her thing...and nothing ever happened! Huh?

There was barely any character development of Bob, the preacher’s son, put through so much misery. Little sister Ruth Ann, (who apparently was over at Grandma’s house a lot) never were we privileged to get a glimpse of their relationship. Grandma has too much personality for us readers to be satisfied with assumptions. I felt like chapters were left out!

The ending was just “fine”. Grandma Dowdel has a streak of warmth and it was nicely tied up with her “gifts”. Yeah, I got the point. Overall, this sequel only gave me a couple smiles. And that’s not anywhere close to the hilarious entertainment of book#1 & #2, and wonderful raves they deserved.

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### **Melody says**

My reaction to this, hard on the heels of the two excellent predecessors is a loud and incredulous, "What the HELL?"

It's well-written, technically. But it's soulless and awful and parts of it made my skin crawl. The Grandma Dowdel in this book is not even shirt-tail cousins with the Grandma Dowdel in the first two. And the stereotypes! Goodness me, the stereotypes.

Bah, humbug.

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## **Lora says**

I liked reading about Grandma Dowdel again, but it just wasn't the same without Joey and Mary Alice. It was an okay read, but not something I would pick up right away.

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## **Sylvester says**

Maybe not as good as "A Year Down Yonder", but anything with Grandma Dowdel is interesting to me. Little Ruth Ann's way of adopting the sayings and mannerisms of Mrs. Dowdel made me laugh. A small disciple. "All her gifts were supposed to be secrets." That may be what I like most about Grandma D. she didn't want praise or attention. She had a hidden well of talents and an overflowing generous impulse. She makes abundance from almost nothing. Anyway, I could rave on. Read it yourself and see what you think of her.

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## **Kendra says**

There's a lot to love about this series, and a lot to cringe at. The fact that it uses all the sayings and idioms from my childhood gives it a serious nostalgic plus in my head. The exploitation of indigenous peoples' former lands not so much.

I know people like these, for better and for worse.

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## **Heidi says**

If you've never met Mrs. Dowdel, you are missing out. Richard Peck's award-winning books, *A Long Way from Chicago*, and *A Year Down Yonder*, tell the most comical and heart-warming tales, all centered around the one and only Grandma Dowdel - one of the most entertaining and memorable characters in all of children's literature, in my opinion.

This book focuses on the holiday season in the 1940s in this small town, and instead of experiencing Mrs. Dowdel through the eyes of her grandchildren, we see her through the wide and stunned eyes of her new neighbors, the Methodist preacher and his family. And as in his other stories, there is humor and character on every single page.

I cannot imagine anyone who would NOT enjoy this book, quite honestly. The audiobook versions of this series are perhaps even more entertaining because the reader knows just what kind of intonation to give Mrs. Dowdel, her cronies, and all those who fear her.

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## **Annet says**

I quote: "Hoo-boy!"

This is just a great series of young people's books, which of course can be read by all ages. And I quote: A rollicking celebration of an eccentric grandmother and childhood memories....

It's a series of three, *A Year Down Yonder* (<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3...>) and *A Long Way*

from Chicago (<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3...>) are the other two previous ones, *A Season of Gifts* plays in 1958. It's all about Grandma Dowdel and a family who comes to live next to her in a small town where a lot is going on and Grandma seems to be in the middle of everything....

The stories are light, hilarious, funny, heartwarming. Laughing out loud, chuckling... can't avoid it when you read this. After reading some tough, dark books, or... after some period of hard work, these books are as light as a feather and just lovely and fun. Therefore: I can certainly recommend Peck's books for everyone!

Richard Peck wrote a lot of books, I need to check more of his work...

Loved it!

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## Julianne says

THIS BOOK. While the narrator is no Mary Alice (or even Joey), and several of the stories had a familiar feel (being riffs off of similar stories in the preceding two books) I'm still glad to have this last glimpse of Grandma Dowdel. This book takes place approximately two decades after *A Long Way From Chicago*, and it's fun to see how all those nasty townspeople's children turned out. lol JUST KIDDING. But seriously, Grandma Dowdel- while holding fewer surprises for readers- is just as smart, sassy, and delightful as in the other two novels.

This is my second time reading this book. The first time was shortly after my library acquired it, because when I saw a Richard Peck novel on the new shelf I couldn't just leave it there, could I? Plus, after I pulled it off the shelf and saw that it was a companion novel to the other Grandma Dowdel books, my obsessive inner fangirl screamed with delight. (Inwardly, of course. I was, after all, in the library, and I'm pretty sure the librarians would have kicked me out if I'd screamed outwardly. The librarians in our children's/junior fiction section mean business- not unlike Grandma Dowdel). However, at that particular point in my life it had been a while since I'd read the other two books, and I remembered feeling slightly let down after reading this one. In some way, it hadn't lived up to my expectations. I decided that it was simply that this book didn't have the magic of my childhood memories attached to it, as the other two had. It wasn't bad, I thought, but I probably wouldn't read this third book ever again.

Then, the Great Grandma Dowdel Reading Binge of 2018 happened. This time, *A Season of Gifts* was different. It was better, because I had recently re-read the other two books. Also, I had them on hand to look up how these characters are related to the characters in the other novels, and Hoo-boy, were there a lot of references that I missed in my first go-around. That definitely made for a better reading experience. My only complaint is that we don't actually get to *see* Mary Alice or Joey as adults, and I'm certain in my own mind that they continued visiting their Grandma whenever they could, with their own families in tow. But then, that's just my obsessive inner fangirl again. And, in case you wondered, my obsessive inner fangirl was also delighted that Ruth Ann ends up liking the Beatles. In fact, my obsessive inner fangirl is now wondering if Richard Peck could possibly expand this series into six books? Or write a book about Ruth Ann and the Beatles? Or write a prequel about when Joey and Mary Alice's father was growing up? She is screaming "GIVE ME MORE GRANDMA DOWDEL!" with increasing urgency, and I'm not sure what to tell her, except to remind her of this fabulous little talk from the beginning of the book, that in many ways sums up the way Grandma sees the world:

**""And don't look for anything out of the law around here,' she said. 'The Cowgills and the Leapers is kin to the sheriff. No justice in these parts. It's every man for hisself.'**

**I felt the town tighten around my throat.**

**'But as the saying goes, if you can't get justice,' Mrs. Dowdel remarked, 'get even.'**

My obsessive inner fangirl: \*cries\* That was so beautiful!

Five minutes later, my obsessive inner fangirl is still crying. This is getting old.

Excuse me while I go read *A Long Way From Chicago* again. Is it my seventh time or my fiftieth? Who knows? At this point, who cares? But speaking of numbers, this is the 200th book I've added to my "read" shelf on Goodreads! Super excited about that, and glad that it was such a good one! \*my obsessive inner fangirl raises a glass of apple cider as she congratulates me/herself\* Here's to the next 200 books!

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### **Linda Hart says**

Light, easy read that is funny, heartwarming, and thought-provoking. I like the idea of an older woman being the centerpiece in this story! Mrs. Dowdel gives 'gifts' that can't be measured by size or price to the young family who moves into her neighborhood.

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### **Melki says**

**"Trouble is," Mrs. Dowdel observed, "after you've turned the other cheek four times, you run out of cheeks."**

This is Peck's third go-round featuring the inimitable Grandma Dowdel, and though not as funny as *A Long Way from Chicago*, nor as touching as *A Year Down Yonder*, it's still a delightful read.

Though life inside and outside Grandma Dowdel's house hasn't changed much - she *still* needs to protect her privy every Halloween - the year is now 1958, and a young minister and his family have moved in next door. Grandma reluctantly comes to the rescue of twelve-year-old Bob who's being picked on by some of the local ne'er-do-wells, and gets her own Mini-Me, as Ruth Ann, Bob's little sister, imitates Grandma's every move. We get to spend a few hilarious months with Bob as he observes his eccentric neighbor, and the book concludes with a true Christmas to remember.

Richard Peck's novels are by far the best literary discovery I've made this year.

**"But as the saying goes, if you can't get justice," Mrs. Dowdel remarked, "get even."**

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### **Kelli Esplin says**

THIS is what I have come to love from Richard Peck! His stories from *A Long Way From Chicago* to this are just feel good stories. You love the antics Mrs. Dowdel puts on and puts up with! A wonderful book.

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## **Emilee B. says**

I thought that this book had a great story line but it was a little bit boring for the first half and it took a while to get to the good part of the story. But overall I would recommend this book , especially if you like historical fiction.

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## **Tasha says**

Head back to the wonderful character of Grandma Dowdel. In this third novel, it is 1958 and a family has moved in next door to her. They are poor as church mice, appropriate since the father is a Methodist pastor. The children include Bob, who immediately falls prey to the town bullies in remarkable fashion. There is his older sister Phyllis, who is obsessed with Elvis and with one of the bullies who bears a resemblance to The King. And then there is his younger sister, Ruth Ann, who is a little lost until she meet Grandma Dowdel. This delightful novel tells the story of the year the family spends next door to Grandma Dowdel who insists that she is neither neighborly or church going, yet manages to always be both.

Peck's characterizations are as always clever and revealing. He has such a gentle touch with his characters even as he is showing far more of their psyche and personality than one might realize. Peck's humor has a vintage feel as is appropriate to the time and place. It is uproariously funny. After reading two werewolf books (and setting both aside) it was a real breath of fresh cold air to read Peck's novel.

Tightly plotted, humorous and beautifully wrapped up in the end, this book is a real treat. Appropriate for ages 8-12, I can see entire families enjoying this one as a read aloud. Classrooms would also enjoy the escapades and fun while learning a touch of history along the way.

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## **Wendy says**

Bewildered by accolades. I really expected to like this a lot (I can generally lay aside isolated incidences of racial insensitivity when I'm deciding how good a book is otherwise, or how much I like it), because I've liked many of Peck's other books, including the previous one in the series, A Year Down Yonder--I read that when it came out and commented that it was the best new kid's book I'd read in years. The writing is good here, of course, because it's Richard Peck; it's technically good. But I thought it so lifeless in comparison to his other books (and other books I've read this year). The protagonist never came alive to me at all (I looked back at the flap to see if he even had a name); I don't feel like I know a thing about him. Grandma Dowdel grated on me after a while. I don't get a sense of a good clear story arc, unless it's the thing about all the gifts Grandma Dowdel has given, as spelled out so obviously in the last pages, but even that didn't come across very clearly to me.

Ruth Ann was my favorite character; she was funny and interesting and real to me.

I usually roll my eyes when people say this about books, but I really do think this is one adults (adults older than me, mostly) are going to enjoy more than children.

A very thin year for children's fiction, indeed.

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