



# Shades of Gray

*Carolyn Reeder*

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## **COURAGE WEARS MANY FACES**

The Civil War may be over, but for twelve-year-old Will Page, the pain and bitterness haven't ended. How could they have, when the Yankees were responsible for the deaths of everyone in his entire immediate family?

And now Will has to leave his comfortable home in the Shenandoah Valley and live with relatives he has never met, people struggling to eke out a living on their farm in the war-torn Virginia Piedmont. But the worst of it is that Will's uncle Jed had refused to fight for the Confederacy.

At first, Will regards his uncle as a traitor — or at least a coward. But as they work side by side, Will begins to respect the man. And when he sees his uncle stand up for what he believes in, Will realizes that he must rethink his definition of honor and courage.

## **Shades of Gray Details**

Date : Published June 4th 2000 by Simon & Schuster (first published November 1st 1989)

ISBN : 9780689838668

Author : Carolyn Reeder

Format : Paperback 160 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Fiction, Military History, Civil War

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## **From Reader Review Shades of Gray for online ebook**

### **Dalton Davis says**

I personally hated this book.

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### **Angela R. Watts says**

I could see the author was trying to show that both sides of the war had their reasons, and everyone was human... But I found the book rather annoying.

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### **Amy says**

My daughter is reading this for 5th grade ELA, and I think it's so timely with the election and racism, sexism, civil rights in the news today. Being around people with beliefs that differ from your own is a good thing. I love how Will has his beliefs changed from all his experiences. Good lessons all around.

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### **booklady says**

I first learned about Shades of Gray thanks to Reading Rainbow, one of the few television shows I let my children watch when they were little--and mostly only so I could get good book tips. I first read it almost twenty years ago and it's still one of my favorite children's stories about the American Civil War. It can be read by most fifth graders and read to younger children.

The main character, orphaned Will Page has come to live with his mother's sister and uncle by marriage, who Will considers a traitor because he refused to fight against the Yankees. Will lost his entire family in the war which has just ended: his father and brothers died fighting, his sisters from disease and his mother from grief. Will is angry and bitter ... and only twelve years old.

It's an incredible story which illustrates that wars are very complex, ultimately involve human lives, and sometimes things aren't what they appear to be.

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### **Tarissa says**

Well, this is one of my very favorite books concerning America's Civil War! Actually, it's the fictional story of Will Page after the war ended. He is only 12 years old and had already lost his entire family.

Will goes to live with his closest relatives, an aunt, uncle & cousin, that he doesn't know. Because Will is so upset about the war taking his family, he can't stand the fact that this new family of his didn't even fight in the war to protect the Confederates.

Turning a city boy into a country boy might not be such a bad idea..  
Check out this book. It is really worth the read!

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### **Mark says**

While a bit preachy & contrived at times, the characters in this book about the year following the end of the Civil War in rural Virginia feel real. We discover along with the main characters the variety of responses to the war on both sides.

I read this as part of Braeden's homeschool curriculum - we use Sonlight, which is literature-based.

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### **Cheri Wiegman says**

Loved this book. It talks about many sides of the civil war that I didn't know about. It also has some great themes such as family, pride, bullying, and war. Great historical fiction for young adults.

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### **Kellyn says**

This exceptionally well-written book tells the story of William Page, a twelve year old boy who lost everyone in his immediate family during the Civil War. Will moves to rural Virginia to live with an aunt and her husband. In his new home Will experiences many new and exciting things yet he is angry at and rejecting of his uncle, a Southerner, who refused to fight for the South. Will expresses the many beliefs and attitudes of those Southerners who fought for that they believed was a just cause. Gradually Will comes to see how others viewed the war; he begins to acknowledge that someone can be a good person even if they believe something radically different from you.

The action is exciting and the attitudes are subtle.

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### **Stacy M. Patton says**

I found this book on a supplemental reading list for the curriculum I am currently using for my kids for homeschool, My Father's World (for the 1859-Modern Times).

Even though this book can be slow at times, I think it brings up a lot of good points and really makes you think about the Civil War as if you were living in that time period. It was especially interesting to us because we are from the Shenandoah Valley and yet we would have not wanted to fight with the Confederates (just like Will's uncle). So it made us think from that perspective. The main character, Will, is a boy from

Winchester who's father and brother both died fighting in the war for the Confederates. He is used to being pampered by his family's slaves and knows little of hard work. His own father forbade his mother from continuing to write to her sister when learning that the sister's husband refused to fight in the war. When Will's mother dies, her dying wish is for Will to go live with her sister and her sister's family. This new living situation brought up a lot of interesting conversations with my kids about who was right and who was wrong, living your beliefs even amidst the consequences, etc. I never thought about these issues from that perspective and it was interesting to ponder and discuss with my boys.

I read this to my 3rd grade and 6th grade son.

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### **Sam says**

Don't read this book. The book doesn't have much action to me. I had to read it for school and I tried many times to drop out of the book club. DON'T BE LIKE ME. Pick a book like Blood On The River instead.

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### **Reilly says**

the book should have been called shades of poop!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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### **Jodi says**

This story supplies much food for thought! It's really a good exploration of different points of view regarding the War between the States. The right choice is not always obvious or black-and-white, nor is it necessarily the same for each person, as in the cases of Will's father vs. his uncle, and their respective convictions and choices during the war, one choosing to fight for what he believes in, and the other choosing not to fight what he doesn't believe in. Will, at first, can't see how anything less than fighting for the Confederacy could be honorable, but as he gets to know his uncle, he gradually learns to understand and come to grips with another perspective. He also begins to see that it takes great courage to stick to one's convictions when one is standing alone; more courage, perhaps, than following a crowd into danger or folly.

This story weaves in good lessons in respect, wise choices, loyalty, and thinking through your decisions.

Be aware that it does contain two misuses of God's name.

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### **Mary Harris says**

Citation: Shades of Gray, by Carolyn Reeder. (Aladdin Paperbacks, 1999). 152 p. Historical Fiction.

Genre: Junior Book- Historical Fiction

Summary: The setting of the book is the end of the Civil War. A young boy named Will Page is faced with the struggles of losing his family during the war and must move to live with relatives.

A. One of the best aspects of the book was the author's use of period writing. By that I mean he used the sayings and language that people during the Civil War.

B. One of the strengths of the book was the development of Will Page's character and his fortitude in dealing with the loss of his family. The book is written so that upper elementary students can understand it and learn about the Civil War.

C. For example, on page 2 the book discusses Will's trip to his Uncle's house and his resentment of the war for killing his father, mother, brother and sisters.

Curriculum Connection: I think this book would be a great book to teach along with a unit involving the Civil War.

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### **Tara Starr bishop says**

This book wrestled beautifully with some very important and complicated concepts: right and wrong, good and bad, what defines a person's character as honorable, and how geography often decides which side of history with which we are aligned, and whether that is deemed "right." My children, ages 7-10 (2 boys and a girl) were all engaged and their interest was held for the length of the novel.

Here were of few of the more poignant passages:

Uncle Jed to his nephew Will, who was orphaned throughout the course of the war, on his commitment to do what HE thought was right as a conscientious objector:

"I've faced enemies too-the enemies to us all.

Hunger. Illness. Grief. And hatred.

But I've never faced my own countrymen as enemies.

A man isn't my enemy just 'cause he believes different than I do."

"I do what I think is right without worrying as to whether it will cause me gain or loss. A man doesn't want to have to stop and try to figure out what everybody else might think or do each time he has to make a decision."

"If you have enough patience, things usually work out. Sometimes it takes a lot of patience, though...Sometimes things work out even when you never thought they could. That's true. But you have an easier life if you can believe that things will turn out all right. It sure beats dreading that they won't."

Highly recommend!

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### **Kayleigh says**

Just like in the story Will didn't like Jed at first but then started to like Jed .I didn't like this book at first but I liked the ending!

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