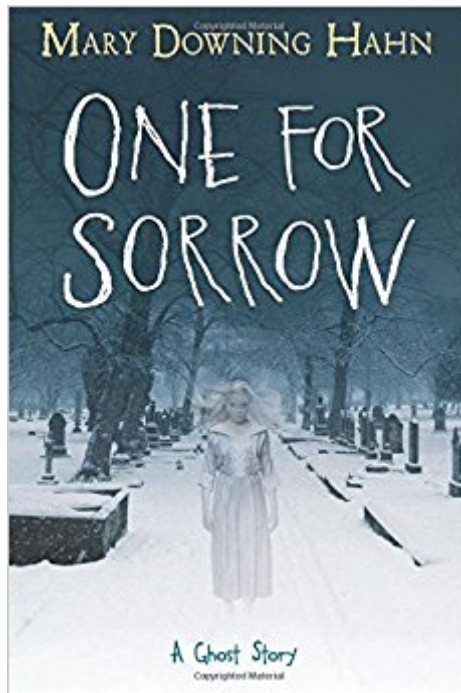




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One For Sorrow: A Ghost Story



Synopsis

Against the ominous backdrop of the influenza epidemic of 1918, Annie, a new girl at school, is claimed as best friend by Elsie, a classmate who is a tattletale, a liar, and a thief. Soon Annie makes other friends and finds herself joining them in teasing and tormenting Elsie. Elsie dies from influenza, but then she returns to reclaim Annie's friendship and punish all the girls who bullied her. Young readers who revel in spooky stories will relish this chilling tale of a girl haunted by a vengeful ghost.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 660 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 304 pages

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Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.1 x 8.2 inches

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Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #40,820 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #73 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1900s](#) #99 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Bullies](#) #181 in [Books > Children's Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Spine-Chilling Horror](#)

Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

Customer Reviews

"Hahn's story is characteristically steeped in eerie atmosphere, and the novel's blend of historical drama, the supernatural, and the intricacies of adolescent friendship is a gripping combination." [PW](#) "Hahn is a veteran author who clearly knows her apples about writing ghost stories, as this, her latest inventive page-turner, evidences... Shivers aplenty, but also genuine emotion that will invite empathy." [Booklist](#) "Another historical and chilling success." [Kirkus](#) "Another solid addition to Hahn's oeuvre, this would also make a spine-chilling pair with Cohen's *The Doll's Eye*." [Bulletin](#)

Mary Downing Hahn, a former children's librarian, is the award-winning author of many popular ghost stories. An avid reader, traveler, and all-around arts lover, Ms. Hahn lives in Columbia, Maryland, with her cat, Oscar. Visit her online at marydowninghahnbooks.com.

On the first day at a new school Annie Brown is befriended and then monopolized by a nasty little girl named Elsie. Elsie is unpopular partly because of her German heritage and mostly because she is obnoxious. Life is overshadowed by World War I and concerns about the safety of loved ones fighting abroad. When the influenza hits, lives are at stake. Elsie is claimed and the mean little girl becomes a vengeful ghost. This is a creepy yet unsatisfying story. Elsie is not a nuanced character even though some of the ugliness of her background is shared. The popular girls at the school are mean and unrelenting in their bullying of Elsie. But because she is more a nasty little sociopath than a misunderstood misfit, it is hard to work up any emotion or sympathy for her. Annie is the most likable of the bunch and she actually experiences remorse after Elsie dies. She is uncomfortable with the girls' macabre practice of visiting wakes to snare sweets. Although much of the time period is conveyed the dialogue and attitudes seem to contemporary to be convincing. It is creepy but not fun and the moral is murky.

New disclaimer due to new rules: I was gifted a free electronic copy of this book, via Netgalley, by the publisher. I am not obligated, nor being forced, to post a review. I am doing it of my own free will as I enjoy reviewing. On advice from , and based on their emailed reply I can say "My review is given voluntarily and the Author/publisher does not require a review in exchange for the book, or attempt to influence my review." I would like to thank Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Children's Book Group for granting my wish on Netgalley and providing me with a free electronic ARC of this book. Now I want to remind people now that "One for Sorrow" is of the "children's fiction" genre. I wouldn't even put it into the YA genre, more the tween (middle school in USA) genre. And I knew this when I asked to read it as, quite frankly, I loved ghost stories when I was that age and the blurb of this book reminded me of such books. And I wasn't disappointed! The era the story was based in was clearly researched, and I do love the author's note at the end explaining the inspiration for the story. Just added to the whole story and explained why the setting was so vivid. And the ghostly hauntings were just right for the age group it is aimed at. A little hair raising, but not so scary as needing to only read it in the

daylight (or in your parents room as it's so scary) - yes, that was me as a tween (all those eons ago) when I was reading a particularly scary kids book. I like a scare. But not such a scare as I couldn't sleep in the dark. So, yeah, my teacher reading the class The Triffids was right out! ;-)

One for Sorrow was a fabulous balance of history, adventure and spine tingling scares - that weren't so scary that the child might need to lock the book away in a drawer because it scared them too much (me again aged 9). I enjoyed it so much I am going to go hunting for more children's ghost stories by Ms Downing Hahn and also see if I can encourage my own kids to read them. Sadly, they are not into scary books like I was. No idea where I've gone wrong with that area of parenting.

Would I recommend this book to others? Yes I would. My children are aged 13, 10 and 8 and I honestly do feel the older two - if they read ghost stories - would thoroughly enjoy this tale. I am going to try my electronic copy on them next time they tell me they are bored and just see how we go. But yes, I feel this book is perfect for the age group it was written for (and those who enjoy that genre but may be a tad older like me) and would indeed recommend it. Though I would emphasise the obvious - it's a ghost story. Be prepared if your kids do find it too scary. I don't think they would but I could be wrong. Would I buy this book for myself? Not for myself exactly, but yes I would definitely consider One for Sorrow, and others like it by Ms Downing Hahn for my children to read. Ghost stories can be such fun when they are written well, and this one was indeed written well!

In summary: A great little ghost tale for children and children at heart who want a little scare.

My youngest daughter was enamored with Mary Downing Hahn's book, so ONE FOR SORROW seemed like a logical follow-up read. While I enjoyed the time period the story is set, I found the ghost story itself rather routine. ONE FOR SORROW is a decent ghost story for children ranging from 8 to 12 years of age. The book aims at the 10-12 age group, but there is nothing in the book that is too awful or mature for an avid 8-year old reader to get through without issue. The stage for this story is set in early 20th Century America during the First World War, when the epidemic of Spanish Influenza proved to be just as deadly as the war itself. The main character is twelve year old Annie and she's experiencing her first year at a new school. The story builds as Annie's growing friendship with the school's more popular girls

abruptly ends a one-sided friendship with the class outcast. With elements of World War I and the Spanish Flu weaving throughout, the story takes a tragic turn that eventually leads to revenge and futility. Hahn tells a good story. What I enjoyed most about ONE FOR SORROW is her descriptive narrative. It is easy to visualize most every aspect of the story; we see and feel everything being discussed. I find this talent particularly helpful when trying to get young readers motivated to read because creating an immersive environment is critical. Hahn nails this. I feel the book offers that immersive quality that will make young readers feel like they are there, watching events happen as they read. The story itself is likely to interest a young reader as it is full of the friendship drama that most kids experience in school: popular kids, the outsider and all the typical behaviors they elicit when combined (jealously, meanness, revenge, regret, etc.). While I found the ghost-story line rather cliché, I'm sure my age has something to do with it. To me, the whole meanness/tragedy/revenge plot is standard fare for a ghost story; Hahn simply delivers this dish with a few extra spices for a little different flavor (World War I and the Spanish Influenza). Kids will likely find this story interesting, but not scary. With the war and Spanish Flu, the theme of death is present throughout, but it is more thought-provoking reality than scary. The experiences of the author's mother as a child provided the background for this particular story (she survived a bout of Spanish Influenza). Overall, a good book with a solid, but fairly predictable ghost storyline. If your child likes to read, this is a well-written book that will keep them engaged from beginning to end without scaring them.

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