



Catch Rider

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Tough-as-nails fourteen-year-old Sid may not have expensive boots like the privileged teen riders in Virginia, but she knows her way around horses. Working with her Uncle Wayne since childhood, she's learned to evaluate horses, break and train them, care for them . . . and ride like a professional. Amid turmoil at home, she dreams of becoming a catch rider—a show rider who can ride anything with hooves. In this salty, suspenseful teen novel, an unexpected opportunity to ride a top-notch horse in an equitation show takes the small-town girl all the way to Madison Square Garden.

Catch Rider Details

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From Reader Review Catch Rider for online ebook

Maya says

Started out okay, but for an author claiming to know her way around horses, she certainly doesn't know her facts. I had a lot of problems with this book, for one the treatment of the horses at the beginning of the book is awful. Also, as someone who shows on the hunter/jumper/equitation A circuit the way everyone is depicted makes me sick. I've been riding since I was 7 and showing since I was 8, never once have I had a groom to take for of my horse for me. This isn't saying that there aren't snotty rich girls, because there are a lot of them, but we aren't all that way.

Another problem I had was that Sid never had had any equitation training prior to the beginning of the book, winning something like the Mclay finals would require years of hard work on your position. Not to mention that there is no way a horse out of the slaughter pen would go around a course at Madison Square Garden, horses that have been showing their whole lives spook there. Not forgetting of course that a pinto that had hardly been ridden in 10 years jumped around a 3'6 course. The writing isn't bad, but the author really needs to stick to what she know instead of giving people the wrong impression of things.

Gayatri Balasubramanian says

Haven't read a horse book for the longest time! This one definitely didn't disappoint :)

Jenna Zanni says

Catch Rider by Jennifer H. Lyne is a very well written fiction novel, that gives you an insight on what living with horses may be like. I really liked how intriguing the book was, which may be why I have reread it multiple times. I do really like how the author gave lots of detail to senerios in the book, but some parts were over exaggerated and talked about too much. There were a wide range of characters throughout the book, which made things stay interesting. The characters were very realistic and I could relate to some of them in some way. I think this book is perfect for anyone who has an interest in horses or who likes real life drama. Overall I thought Catch Rider was a very well written novel that can give the reader insight on real life scenarios and teach you about life with horses.

Lacey Heacock says

I've ridden horses all my life and never have I heard of a "catch rider". It's someone who can ride any horse at any time. Jump on and go kind of thing. This story follows the life of a teen who doesn't really have the money to be able to afford and ride her own horses in big shows. She learns how to ride the most difficult horses and ends up being a catch rider! Great read if you're into riding and horses!

Stephanie A. says

WHAT A GREAT BOOK. Sometimes books about the A circuit bore me -- like racing, the horses can feel like they come secondary to the prizes and prestige -- but this is one where the main character almost fell into it, born and raised from fairly redneck, low-income rural roots. I loved her spitfire attitude and the flavor of the dead-end paper mill small town. I liked the simmering conflict of her frustration with her mother's physically abusive boyfriend. I liked that there was no central romance for the girl, Sid. I also liked the rough-edged horsemanship of her horse-trader uncle, whose methods were neither ideal nor cruel, but very much like an old cowboy.

There was a lot of love for horses and the stablehand way of life is the point, even once she began squeezing herself into fancy, expensive riding gear for fancier and more expensive shows. It's not so much a single girl-and-her-horse story as the story of a girl immersed in what she loves. Many horses take center stage underneath her, she bonds with all of them, and I fell in love with all of them and their stories. Sub will forever be my favorite, though.

Emma says

I loved this book and read it in 2 days. I am one of those horse crazy girls. I do the A-Circuit showing that they describe in this book. I understood everything in this book and knew exactly what the author was trying to tell us. There's nothing worse than a horse book where the author knows nothing about horses. This author obviously knew a lot and must have done showing when she was younger. I would recommend this book to anyone who loves horses or does competitive showing like me. One of the best books I ever read and defiantly deserves 5 stars.

Tara Spears says

2.5 stars rounded up

This author needed to research horses and the people who love them before writing her book. The very first chapter put me off, and her lack of knowledge showed throughout the book. She obviously is NOT a horse person herself!

No adult would ever allow a youth to run a horse into the ground, as they did in the first chapter. ANY horse heaving and lathered in the RAIN would be seriously about to topple over. And running balls to the wall in mud, in a storm? NOT going to happen unless you are just horridly cruel. And what relative/adult would allow it? This whole first chapter was a scene of animal abuse like none I have ever read.

This continued through the parts of the book I actually read. Where was the compassion? The protag didn't have any and neither did the author. Being a horse crazy teen, being someone who made her life in the horse industry before turning to writing, I will tell you this girl would never be allowed on any of my horses.

The writing was good, however the author needs to stick to writing things she knows, as research does not seem to be a concern of hers. I cringe at the fact girls will read this, and think this-- treating horses this way-- is okay.

Christine Meunier says

Lyne writes this great story that follows the unfortunate life of Sidney, a 14 year old girl that loves her horses and loves to ride. Having ridden from a young age, Sid is an accomplished rider. It's the one thing that she has to cling to in a town where teens finish school and gain work at the paper mill, or they drop out of school and start at the mill earlier.

The people in the town aren't educated, don't speak well and don't aim high. Sid has a dream though - she's going to be a catch rider. A catch rider is someone who can ride any horse thrown at them and perform well.

Whilst avoiding her mother's abusive boyfriend, Sid clings to her uncle Wayne and through him gains a position as a stable hand at a posh riding barn. The kids here ride horses that are worth more than Sid could ever dream of earning in a lifetime. In spite of her low stature in society, she knows she can out ride any of them, she just needs to be given a chance.

Catch Rider has some mild language in it, but otherwise is a great read. The author portrays the horse industry realistically, whilst also helping the reader to learn about horse terms and the jumping scene.

This book so far is perhaps one of the most informative horse novels I've read and for that reason, it get's high marks in my books! I love a read that'll enlighten and entertain you, leaving you a more informed horse person once you've finished it.

The main character is someone with a hot temper and a lot of guts. Although appearing a bit brash at the start, it was easy to warm to her and to be rooting for the underdog as the story progressed. A great read.

Jenn says

3.5, really.

The ending of this book saved it from being one of those super-trite girl-who-has-nothing-but-is-amazing-rider-shows-them-all-by-winning-big-on-not-fancy-horse. I mean, it IS that, but the very, very end saves it from being really annoying!

It's well-written - I need to see if this author has written more!

Richie Partington says

Richie's Picks: CATCH RIDER by Jennifer H. Lyne, Clarion. June 2013, 288p., ISBN: 978-0-547-86871-4

"The Magical Mystery Tour is dying to take you away
Dying to take you away, take you today"
-- Lennon/McCartney

"Now I really got it. This was how girls on the A-circuit stayed clean and relaxed, not exhausted or dirty. They had grooms. They had someone to clean the stalls and wrap the legs, braid, feed, water, polish, and scrub. They didn't touch hoof polish when they were dressed and ready. They didn't clean out the grime from between a mare's udders or the snot from a horse's nose. They didn't pick the scabs out of a horse's ears from fly bites or put salve over the wounds to heal them.

"How was this fair? How could you say you rode horses -- and won horse shows -- if you'd never had to do these things? Maybe there was a trial period, and once you graduated, you just got a groom and moved up. Maybe it was my turn to move up, and I would never have to dig to the bottom of a filthy stall again.

"But I knew this wasn't true. These girls were just lucky. I thought about Wayne and what kind of rider he would have been with a setup like this. It wasn't fair -- at all"

Fourteen year-old Sidney (Sid) Criser has been a farm girl riding horses since she could stand up and walk. A teen with guts, attitude, work ethic, and a true love for horses, Sid lives in a smelly Virginia mill town, and is dealing with her beloved dad having died, her mom now living with a physically abusive SOB, no money for anything, and months still to go until she can get her learner's permit. (Not that it stops this farm girl from driving all over the place anyway.) It is her mother's brother, the amazing horseman Wayne, who is the one person Sid can count on. But, then, Uncle Wayne's an alcoholic who can suddenly be out to lunch on a week-long bender.

Wayne brings Sid into his work space, getting her an after-school job shoveling horse poop 90 miles away at a fancy horse facility where there are world-renowned trainers, multi-million dollar horses, and affluent young women who don't ever have to get down in the muck. Putting up with the constant crap dished out by one of those seemingly-lucky rich girls, Sid suddenly finds that her mouth -- and the horse skills she has to back up that mouth -- land her atop one of those multi-million dollar rides in a show ring.

Her debut in the ring is all one could ever hope for. But when the rich girl snags her ride, it seems that Sid will need a lot more luck to make her mark as a catch rider (someone who can ride anything) given her lack of funding and the lack of a show horse of her own on which to compete.

"Wayne looked at the tooth and got me some pliers out of his tool bag. 'Yank that thing outta there. Real quick.' He pulled the horse's top lip as hard as he could to distract him and braced himself against the wall with the other hand. The horse snorted and his eyes popped open wide.

"Got him?" I asked.

"Yep. Get in there."

"I reached into the horse's mouth, clamped the pliers down on the tooth, and ripped it out. The horse sat back on his haunches and slammed into the wall behind him.

"Wayne looked down at the pliers in my hand with the horse's brown tooth.

"Good girl."

"The horse shook his head hard when Wayne let him go.

"You can rinse now, mister." I said."

I'm no horse expert, but this tale sure feels and smells like the real deal. This is the first book by Jennifer H. Lyne who grew up riding and whose grandfather built the barn in which Triple Crown-winner Secretariat was born. It was a real page turner for me as I rooted for Sid to avoid flunking out of school, do something about her mother's abusive boyfriend, not get herself arrested for driving without a license, and somehow make it to Madison Square Garden to compete in the nationals. It also gives us a look at the seamy side of the show horse biz, with the doping of animals by trainers who want to win at any cost.

Perhaps you know a book where there is resolution to the story but you are so into the characters that you are

not ready to say goodbye. That's how much I enjoyed getting to know Sid Criser and her Uncle Wayne. I'm sure hoping to see another book out of this debut author.

Richie Partington, MLIS

Richie's Picks <http://richiespicks.com>

BudNotBuddy@aol.com

Moderator http://groups.yahoo.com/group/middle_... <http://slisweb.sjsu.edu/people/facult...>

Miss Manekofsky says

I wanted to like this, but there were so many things thrown in that didn't strengthen the story but just made it feel formulaic. I don't know, I think the Scorpio Races was soooo good it may have ruined all other horse books for me:)

Donna says

See More of My Reviews at Me You and My Shelf

Wow, what a great book! This is only the third young adult horse book I've read (most horse books are for younger readers) and it's looking pretty good so far. I enjoyed reading it, but I did have some issues with the beginning.

Catch Rider is about a girl called Sidney, or Sid. She wants to become a catch rider, which is a rider who gets paid to ride other people's horses. However, her harsh home life and lack of money are huge obstacles.

I really loved how realistic this was. The decision to have a main character with an alcoholic for an uncle, an abusive stepdad, and hardly enough money to pay the bills was a great change from the usual story about snotty rich girls. This added depth and personal growth to the book.

I had a HUGE problem with Sid from the start. Despite claiming to be a humble, hardworking girl, she actually proved to be a bit stuck up. She was stuck about about her riding skills. At one point in the book, she lists all the things she can do on a horse. Now, I can't quote my review copy, but imagine if someone said something like this to you:

I can run 2 kilometres in 5 minutes. I was jumping over 2 metre high jumps from the time I was five! My shot put is so strong that after I throw it, you can't even see it anymore.

You'd want to punch them, right? This was annoying, and did not match Sid's character. Sid was supposed to be the opposite of a snobby rich girl.

Otherwise, the characters were alright. None of them were what I expected. The typical loving family? Non-existent. A reliable person who's always there for you? Nope. Sid was a well developed tough girl. She's determined, and definitely a fighter. Her uncle was a hardworking guy, just as determined and tough as Sid

was. However, the other characters weren't very good. Sid's mother and her stepfather fell flat. Her best friend bored me, and rarely appeared anyway. This was an area that could've used a lot of improvement.

My favorite part of this book was the realistic depiction of the horse industry. The author depicted the industry as one where the rich people have a clear advantage over the poor, which is very true. There are plenty of bitchy people in that industry. However, in the end, the author makes it clear that it is not always this way. Even the darker side of competition riding like doping were touched on.

After a rocky start, *Catch Rider* kept me engaged all the way. I would definitely recommend this for anyone who loves horses. It was realistic and exciting. Go out and grab yourself a copy!

An ARC was provided by the publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Cheryl says

"I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it." - Thomas Jefferson

I love horse stories and always have. And this one is a winner in my eyes.

Sidney "Sid" Criser is fourteen years old and has known her whole life what she wants to be - a catch rider, riding any horse put in front of her, sometimes for other people.

"*Catch Rider*" is a wonderful tale of overcoming obstacles and trying for what you really want in life.

The character development is superb in the story. The reader gets to see what Sid's life is like, coming from a very poor background in the mountains of Bath County, Virginia. Sid isn't always the nicest person because of the anger she has bottled up inside her but we get to see she has a loving heart - and not just for horses.

The horse and competition sections of the book read realistically and are inspiring.

NOTE: This book is shown to be written for readers ages twelve years old and up. That seems about right. I am quite sure there are many adults that will like it as much as I did. There is some salty language but not a lot. There is adult drinking and some instances of domestic violence.

Oh, and I loved the book cover - very appropriate.

Tara Chevestt says

I find this to be a pretty interesting book. I didn't know there was such a thing as a catch rider: a person that can just show up and ride folks' horses for them, make em look good in competitions.

That's all the heroine wants to be. She fourteen and she's had a rough life. Her father is dead, her mother is with a deadbeat abusive man, her uncle is a drunk, she's dirt-poor, and nobody is really looking after her. She's even driving herself around when it's illegal.

She can ride anything with four legs, it seems.

I love how this book showed us riding isn't necessarily about the best training or whatever it is fancy people's money can buy. Riding comes from practice and grit, and this heroine has a lot of that.

I'm not done. Full review: <http://wwwbookbabe.blogspot.com/2013/...>

Margo Berendsen says

I save five stars only for those books I know I'll want to read again, and this one made me fall in love. I love any story about an underdog who beats the odds, and this is especially true in the world of horse showing and racing where the rich usually rule.

But I fell in love with Sidney Criser not just because she's an underdog, but because she's poor and smart, tough and stubborn, full of attitude but not snarky. She's a little bit of a redneck, but she also has this really neat way of seeing the world:

That old Ford truck had the biggest cab - felt like a tractor-trailer in there. The window handle was so big, sometimes I'd pretend I was cranking the winch on a big ship out in the ocean, raising the mainsail or whatever it's called.

Put Sid and her horse-trading, often-drunk Uncle Wayne together into the slick rich world of hundred-thousand-dollar show horses - what a great contrast! I've read other books with this contrast, but *Catch Rider* pulls it off so much better. Partially because the setting is so well done: Sidney comes from a hick Virginian town where the biggest ambition the locals have is to get a job at the papermill. Covington is in the Blue Ridge mountains, right near the West Virginia border: this is true hill billy territory. My grandma grew up just 25 miles away in Eagle Rock, so I know this area and some stories about it, but it was so much fun learning more about it in *Catch Rider*, especially the part about June.

This is Sid talking about Melinda, her mother. She always called her mom and dad by their names, not for any defiant reason; that's just Sid:

We went camping up on Loft Mountain and looked for wildflowers, having a contest to see who could find more. I always won. I found some Indian Pipes the last time we went, and then Doll's Eye. I was pretty proud because only real hillbillies found Doll's Eye - the kind of mountain people who knew where the ginseng and the chanterelles grew but didn't tell anyone. I'd hoped we'd do all kind of things together, like going on trips. Maybe one day we'd go to the beach. I'd always wanted to see the ocean.

I have a very different background than Sid, but there's some things all horse-crazy girls can identify with: oogling over the horse magazines (*Practical Horseman*, now that brought back some memories!) and the

famous names (George Morris) and I even caught a couple references from Centered Riding (the soft eyes and the deep breathing). Even though Sid's poor, she gets to live a life I would've coveted as a kid:

I was a rider who could ride anything. I'd ridden burros, mules, draft horses, ponies, racehorses, gaited horses. I'd driven a team, and I could drive a four-in-hand by the time I was ten....the one thing I'd never ridden was a "made" horse - a pushbutton, a horse that did everything for you. A made horse had been schooled until it was near perfect. You pointed him at a jump and he just jumped it. I couldn't imagine what it was like to rely on a horse this way. When I was riding a green horse, I felt like I had to damn near pick the horse up and carry him over the fence myself.

Sid is just so different, I can't help another quote because I love her voice and her attitude:

My room was a mess. I liked the idea of it being neat and clean, but some part of me wanted it messy. I liked the dirty clothes on the floor and the horse books everywhere. I liked it because it was mine. Sometimes I felt like a dog who brought things back to my dog bed, things that no one else was allowed to touch. Sometimes I wanted to scratch around and curl up with all my things and fall asleep, alone. Sometimes I wondered if I was a terrier in a former life, growling at people and scratching around for food.

A word about the horses - don't expect a My Friend Flicka sort of kid-and-her-horse bonding from this book. Horses are business for Sid and Wayne, though Wayne is a little sentimental about Submarine, and Sid sure does appreciate Idle Dice, the famous show horse she manages to catch a ride on. I loved the scene where they discover Sonny has never been to a show before, and here they are in NEW YORK CITY and MADISON SQUARE GARDEN for the biggest hunter equitation show in America, and they have to take the horse (view spoiler)

You couldn't pay me to drive a horse trailer through New York City, I'd be as freaked out as Sonny! - so I loved that the author didn't skip over details like this, even down to the scary hotel room that was all Wayne could afford. (And details like the stories Wayne tells while they are driving up to NYC, and how he made Sid do her homework on the way).

Here is pure Sid, why I love this girl so much:

"Since when do you care so much what other people think?" he asked....

Deep, deep down, I really didn't care. I thought about the people I admired, like Eileen Cleek, like George Morris, like Bezie Winants. My father. And Wayne. [these are all great characters in the story, by the way. Well, except for George Morris]. They didn't give a royal sh** what anyone thought about them. What had happened to me, that I suddenly cared how much people looked at me? As a little kid, I'd walk into the supermarket with dirt in my hair, and I didn't give a damn if someone thought I was living in a car. But being in ninth grade, and going to Oak Hill, and being around people like Dee Dee and Kelly, I'd started feeling their eyes on me

and wondering if they were right about me, that they were better than me.

And then this:

Then I pretended I was twelve and I was jumping some crazy pony, not caring what anyone thought. Not worrying, not thinking of all the things that could go wrong. Just imagining it working.

Sonny got in deep and jumped it, ears straight forward, as though he were saying to himself, *Damn, she's serious....* We landed, and Sonny dropped his head, got behind the bit and thought about bucking but didn't. He was happy. I wondered who was a bigger mental case, him or me.
