



Jessica

Mary Francis Shura

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She lived in a time when loving the wrong man could mean exile from her home. One Man would love her; one man would lose her.

Jessica had lived all her life on the flat Kansas prairie. It was there, the year she turned sixteen, that Jessica fell in love. The young Indian brave, Wheeling Hawk, saved her from a flood, and Jessica's heart was lost. But even the most spirited young woman would have to defy her family and home for so distant a love. And Jessica couldn't see in Will Reynold's eyes, where once there was anger, there now shone a love of his own.

Jessica Details

Date : Published 1984 by Scholastic

ISBN : 9780590332422

Author : Mary Francis Shura

Format : Paperback 350 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Historical, Historical Fiction, Romance, Historical Romance, Fiction

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From Reader Review Jessica for online ebook

Edallia says

“(See my review of "Amanda" for my series overview.)

I searched high and low for this book as a kid, (I love a good frontier story!) and it was the first one I added to my meager Sunfire collection when this new obsession bit my brain. I am actually terribly glad I read it as an adult, and not as a scatterbrained middle-schooler, because I would have missed all of the beauty of this book.

Yes, I'm talking about a teen romance serial here. *Jessica* is remarkably mature, realistic, and thoughtful, even for a Sunfire, and it sorta makes me go "Wah."

Allow me to explain: Jessica Findlay is a bright, capable girl living on the Kansas prairie in the 1870s. She's got her nice father Patrick, a real sweetheart of a stepmother, Melanie, a couple of adorable little brothers, and a jerky new neighbor in Will Reynolds. In short order, Will's wife dies in childbirth, Jessica's father says, "hey, my kid hasn't got anything better to do than take care of your kid!" and Jessica, seething with resentment, is forced to give up a lucrative teaching job for a babysitting gig she doesn't want.

But it's not all bad- Jessica grows to love baby James (whom she cutely nicknames Jimson, after the hardy weed) and when a prairie flash flood threatens the dugout they're in, they are rescued by an alert, clever, and did I mention *handsome* Cheyenne brave named Wheeling Hawk.

This isn't one of those "love conquers all" romances that ignores the social and cultural gulf between two people as different as Jessica and Wheeling Hawk. Although the two are soon deeply in love and meeting in secret, they are eventually discovered, and though it's hard for our more colorblind modern eyes to understand, their love angers and frightens their respective families.

The thing is, Jessica's a sensible girl who knows *what* she needs to do, it just takes her a little time to figure out *how.* She's already had to find a way to tell off a childhood sweetheart who's grown into a bully and had to cut ties with one unworthy friend. The most satisfying thing about Jessica as a character is that she can always see the writing on the wall. In a world of wishy-washy romance heroines, she is absolutely refreshing.

And how about that Melanie Findlay, who makes the case for stepmothers everywhere - "I have to walk a line between being a mother and a friend" - and for gently, sweetly sounding the death knell of Jessica's one great love by pointing out that neither would ever be truly welcome in the other's world.

Jessica knows her love affair with Wheeling Hawk has to end. And that it ends maturely, with an acknowledgment that although they truly love each other, there's not a way to be together, is both realistic and heartbreaking.

There are a few episodic bits of Sunfire cheesiness interspersed throughout, but even a couple of seemingly irrelevant detours all add up to an important plot development at the end, which carries its own faint hint of cheesiness, but which I thoroughly enjoyed. I actually won't spoil it for you. Just read it and have fun.

Mary Francis Shura is a very dependable one of the Sunfire authors. Her research blends into the story quite well, and the book as a whole feels very organic.

And that Will Reynolds? Not the biggest jerk in the world, after all. You'll definitely be singing "love the one you're with" at the end of this one.

The verdict: If you don't read another Sunfire, read this one. If you're collecting, track this one down at all costs.

Cindy says

I originally read this series back in the 80s, checking them out from my elementary school library. Having re-read them as an adult I think they stand the test of time and are still relevant as far as historical fiction is concerned.

Young Adult Historical Vault says

Ah, geez, where to start? What an example of 80s cheese! It's really laid on with a trowel here--and Jessica has FOUR different suitors, which I think is a record even for Sunfire novels! While some of the other novels have semi-realistic love stories, none of the romantic leads here have a lick of personality or even a believable love arc. Some of the dialogue is straight out of a Lifetime movie, and I'm sure I would have been a hundred percent in love with it as a teenager, but now it didn't fit at all with the rest of the writing.

Check out my full review at Young Adult Historical Vault <https://yahistoricalvault.com/2016/07...> for spoilers and commentary on the twist ending!

Carrie says

I loved this whole series. My favorite was Nicole, who was a wealthy girl who "slummed" it with the lower class on the Titanic. She fell in love with one of the lower class boys, and then the ship sank. Hmm that sounds so much like some very popular movie I saw once.... but the book was written in like 1985.... just sayin'.

catherine james says

SQUEEEEEEEE!!! I've spent *years* trying to remember this series (which I *ADORED* as a pre-teen) and thanks to the intar-web I've finally found them! Yes they were formulaic teen romances, but they were also wonderfully entertaining escapism and a huge part of my childhood. (Dates read are "best guess").

Jessica says

This book was okay. It was the first Sunfire I read, because I have the same name as the main character. This book really annoyed me though. Her father basically controlled her. He wouldn't even listen to her at all. I also feel that he kind of made her decision on who to pick. And the ending just seemed to come out of left field. Anyway, the history stuff was cool, and the action was amazing.

Megan says

Date below: not the first reading

Meghan says

Felt like neither of the love interests were genuine.

Terri says

it is good story

Brooke says

This one review is for all the "Sunfire Romance" books I've read. I've read many of these teenage romances forever ago, but if you want a perfectly CLEAN romance read, these are the best! There is nothing questionable or borderline in them whatsoever. They all have the basic idea of one girl having to decide between two guys and all take place during some past historical period. They are quick reads, even the longer ones (which I enjoyed more than the shorter books).

Diana says

Despite it being one of my favourites in the series, I found the ending very rushed. Otherwise, this is a great book.

Shelly says

The Sunfire reads continue. Another interesting setting. I don't fully buy the ending. One part was necessary, but the other wasn't developed enough. I am glad to read these Sunfires to find books in these settings because I can't find many current books in them, especially outside the Christian fiction.

Tami says

I read these books when I was a teen & loved them! Would love to read them again!

Greymalkin says

This is a teen romance book set in Kansas in the frontier days. I loved this as a young girl and decided to give it a re-read as an adult to see if I wanted to keep it. I was surprised at how even handed and complex the relationships were in the book. Nothing in it was a surprise but the formulaic relationship between the heroines and the two men she must choose between (a classic Sunfire trope) is made interesting by the way the cultural differences and personality clashes were dealt with. The secondary characters were not just window dressing but served as important anchors in the main character's growth and understanding of herself and the world she lived in.

Full of cliches and you see where things are going the second you meet the relevant people but there's a thread of practicality and historical detail that makes this one of the more substantial romances of its type.

Shelley says

My favorite Sunfire! Jessica lives on the Kansas prairie. Her story deviated from the formula because she

had three guys instead of two, not to mention she was taking care of an infant and her aspiration was to be a wife.

Raquel says

Oh, Jessica. This is one of my top two favorite books in the Sunfire series. It's set at such an interesting time in American history and the story really shows you many elements of life at that time. Jessica is such a lovable character and the overall flow of the story is really captivating. It's a good read at any age and one I enjoy repeatedly.

Reading with Cats says

Loved this one despite the rampant case of insta-love.

Mik says

I didn't put her in after I read her-how ODD of me!
