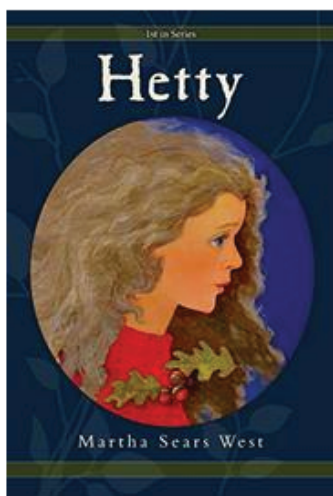


KIRKUS REVIEWS



HETTY

by Martha Sears West

KIRKUS REVIEW

Sixth-grader Hetty adjusts to a new school, finds a forest refuge, and learns the reason for a lurking stranger in West's first installment of a Truman-era YA trilogy.

Henrietta "Hetty" Annette Lawrence tries to pay attention in math class but daydreams about the word "hypotenuse." Born with a heart defect, now fixed by an operation, Hetty had been home-schooled in recent years by doting parents Dora and Daniel, the latter a lawyer who shares his tales of working in the Forest Service. The family has moved to a new home to be close to Hetty's new school, the all-girls Haxton Country Academy. A bit shy around the others, she often hangs out in "Hannah," a mighty oak in nearby "Olive Witch" forest (the name comes from Hetty mishearing her father say "all of which"). While hurt when not invited to a birthday party, Hetty also makes strides in her new world, including befriending schoolmate Melinda Morgenthal, who has a considerate (and handsome) older brother, and gaining some attention by winning a local spelling bee. By novel's end, there is a growing sense that Hetty is being watched. A dramatic act of nature clears up this mystery, significantly changing her life. West (*Longer than Forevermore*, 2013, etc.) includes an illustrated map and sketches of flowing-haired Hetty. While there is a sense of the time period, including mention of Daniel and Dora's new 1949 Studebaker, physical location is left a bit hazy, perhaps to reflect this delightful heroine's fanciful mind, although there's missed opportunity to more richly fictionalize a real destination as did *Anne of Green Gables*, this work's obvious influence. Still, West effectively builds suspense for this book's final revelations, including shifting occasionally from Hetty's third-person perspective to plant hints via other characters' viewpoints. Best of all, parents will appreciate the "clean" nature of this novel, which should still please a tweener audience given its tee-up of the romance no doubt to come in the next installment of this series.

Sweet teen girl adventures, reminiscent of *Anne of Green Gables*.