

# KIRKUS REVIEWS

## TITLE INFORMATION

### IT'S ME, PIPPA!

Martha Sears West

Clean Kind World Books (205 pp.)

\$13.95 paperback, \$4.99 e-book

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## BOOK REVIEW

A 9-year-old girl experiences an unforgettable summer in this middle-grade novel.

Pippa Morganthal has just finished third grade and is pondering the word *responsible*. She wants to be a responsible person from now on, starting with reminding her great-aunt Freydis to take her daily medication—a duty that Pippa takes seriously. Unfortunately, when the girl arrives at Freydis' house, the woman is dead, seemingly of natural causes. A frightened Pippa runs away after her 11-year-old uncle and best friend, Danny, warns her that she could go to jail. This kicks off a series of events in Pippa's summer involving fried chicken picnics, amateur circuses, and a dog named Rosie along with more serious matters. The last includes a possible beauty contest, a stay with Pippa's well-to-do grandparents while her dad serves in Congress, and makeovers from the Morganthals' tenant Katrinka Ostler, a single mom to 7-year-old Al, who may have a deeper connection to the protagonist's father. Pippa also fixes up the kindly family chauffeur, Ignatz "Natz" Gorman, who's struggling to get his high school diploma, with her substitute teacher Miss Norman, who uses a wheelchair and still lives with her mother. Will there be a love connection, as Pippa hopes? As the rising fourth grader ponders her list of goals for the summer, she wonders if she can become "resplendent" as well as responsible. This is the sixth novel in West's Hettyseries, which previously followed Pippa's mother. There are several references to earlier events, which may spur readers to pick up other Hetty titles. Pippa turns out to be a compelling protagonist. She is a formidable girl, both daring and generous, and she always strives to do the right thing, even if her choices aren't always wise. Set during the Richard Nixon administration, the story harkens back to a more analog era, which may be eye-opening for young readers. The book, which features the author's black-and-white illustrations, also delivers copious dark content, including kidnapping, bloodshed, discussions of dog fighting, and animal euthanasia. In addition, there are many sections from Natz's and Miss Norman's points of view, revealing the insecurities of two adults. These bleak portions seem odd for the novel's target audience.

A nostalgic tale that offers a striking young hero and strange detours.

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