

Be Ever Hopeful, Hannalee Short Guide

Be Ever Hopeful, Hannalee by Patricia Beatty

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Overview

Be Ever Hopeful, Hannalee, the sequel to Turn Homeward, Hannalee, follows the Reed family as they move from Roswell, Georgia to Atlanta after their home was burned down by Union soldiers. Hannalee's older brother Davey, who served in the Roswell Guards of the Confederate Army, has returned home after the end of the Civil War.

Near the end of the war he had been wounded in the left arm and was captured by Union troops. He speaks well of the Union doctors who treated him, saying they strove as hard to save Confederate soldiers as Union ones, but his arm was infected and they had to amputate it just above the elbow. He was a carpenter at the Roswell cotton mill before the war, so he hopes to find work in the rebuilding of Atlanta, much of which had been burned down during the war. He takes his family—his mother, sister Hannalee, little brother Jem, and infant sister Paulina—along with their old family friend Marilla Sanders, to Atlanta. Once there, he soon finds that there is plenty of work for carpenters but little for a onearmed carpenter who must work slowly.

It is up to Hannalee, Jem, and their mother to find work to support themselves while Davey learns a new trade—telegraph operating, which requires only one hand. Hannalee finds work in a fabric store, Jem works drumming up merchant advertising for a city newspaper, and their mother works as a domestic. Their hardships are many. They take up residence in a shanty in a foul-smelling encampment outside the city; it costs them twelve dollars a month for a miserable place: "I saw a plain dirt floor, two little rooms, six windows with no glass in them, and that was all. There wasn't even a cook stove." It is at its worst in cold, rainy weather.

Be Ever Hopeful, Hannalee is Hannalee's first-person account of how she and her family struggle to establish themselves in Atlanta and to find a better place to live before winter sets in. They have several adventures, including solving a mystery in which Davey is accused of murdering a Union officer. In 1865, Atlanta was under marshall law, so a military court would decide the fate of Davey, a former corporal in the Confederate Army. The penalty for the crime would be death by hanging.



About the Author

Patricia Robbins Beatty was born on August 26, 1922, in Portland, Oregon, to Walter M. and Jesse (nee Miller) Robbins. Her father was an officer in the Coast Guard and his career required his family to move often. As a child, Beatty did a great deal of reading. She seems to have been an introspective child; she was hospitalized for five months when she was ten years old, and during that time she read constantly, which seems to have enhanced her thoughtful nature. Her family returned to Portland in 1935, and Beatty spent her young adult years there, attending both junior high school and high school.

Beatty was not strictly a bookworm in those years. She took up horseback riding, becoming knowledgeable about caring for horses. Horses figure in several of her books. Her love of learning was probably the reason she decided in high school that she wanted to become a teacher. After high school, she attended Reed College, where she received her B.A. in 1944. For a while, her interest in the natural world made her contemplate getting a degree in marine biology, but she eventually earned her degree in literature and history. While at Reed College, she was an athlete, participating in fencing.

She met John Beatty while she was in college. After he left the U.S. Army, they were married on September 14, 1950. He became a history professor in California, and they had a daughter Ann Alexandra. From 1947 to 1950, she was a high school teacher in Coeur d'Alene in Idaho. From 1952 to 1953, she worked for Dupont corporation as a technical librarian, then was a librarian in Riverside, California from 1953 to 1956. She did not return to teaching until the late 1960s, when she began teaching courses on creative writing for UCLA.

According to her own recollection, her work as a librarian was dull, and she took up writing to relieve her boredom. The publication of *Indian Canoemaker* in 1960 began her career as a writer of books for young people. She had lived among Native Americans for much of her childhood because her father was often stationed on Western reservations. She drew on her knowledge of Native American customs for the book; the book also reveals her characteristic penchant for thorough research into the history and backgrounds of her subjects. With the publication of *Bonanza Girl* in 1962, Beatty became a full-time writer. In about 1962, she found herself consulting her husband, a professor of history, about details for a book she was working on.

This led to their collaboration on *At the Seven Stars*. He specialized in the history of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, and their several collaborations usually were focused sometime in those eras. Patricia Beatty became very knowledgeable about American history, so when she was not collaborating with her husband, she was writing books about America on her own.

John Beatty died in 1975. Patricia Beatty later married an economics professor, Carl G. Uhr, on July 31, 1977.



Beatty remained a very productive writer, with her books published during the 1980s earning much praise from book reviewers. Her last few years saw her writing some of the best books of her career. She died of lung cancer on July 9, 1991, in Riverside, California.

Beatty recollected with some bitterness how she was treated by some people when she began publishing books.

Friends, if such they were, and neighbors gave her a hard time about writing and thereby supposedly neglecting her duties as a mother. This made Beatty a feminist, and the fires for feminism still burned hotly in her to the end of her life. She chose to create strong young women in most of her novels; she wanted to portray young adults coping with hard times and challenging situations. This gives her novels an utterly uncondescending quality because Beatty seems to have been at all times conscious of what young people can accomplish.

Beatty received several awards for her work, including the Scott O'Dell Award for Charley Skedaddle (1987), given to an outstanding novel that focuses on an aspect of American history.

Among her other awards are the Commonwealth Club of California Medal in 1965 for Champion Towers and the Southern California Council on Children's and Young People's Literature Medal in 1983 for Jonathan Down-Under. A Donkey for the King was named a 1966 Horn Book honor book; Red Rock Over the River was named a 1973 Golden Kite Award honor book by the Society of Children's Book Writers; Wait for Me, Watch for Me, Eula Bee was named a 1978 honor book by the Western Writers of America; Lupita Manana was named a Jane Addams Children's Book Award honor book.

Setting

Georgia in 1865 was a very dangerous place. Deserters and former soldiers from both the Union and Confederate Armies had formed into gangs of highwaymen, robbing and attacking wayfarers. Atlanta itself was a violent city. People there are warned not to be on the streets after dark. In her afterword to the novel, Beatty notes the many killings and other crimes that occurred in Atlanta in 1865. The city is peopled by Northerners come to set up businesses, Southerners trying to run their own businesses, and numerous Southerners, white and black, hoping to find employment in the rapidly rebuilding city.

Atlanta had been set afire three times during the Civil War. The first time was because of incendiary bombs fired into the city by the besieging Union Army; the second time was because of Confederate General Hood's men blowing up railroad cars before abandoning the city; the third time was because Union General Sherman's troops set fire to it. The city is a confusion of new buildings, old ones that survived the fires, false fronts with no buildings left behind, and front steps leading into open air, the ground below scorched by flames.



Social Sensitivity

Racial issues are discussed in *Be Ever Hopeful, Hannalee*, mostly in its last few chapters. Hannalee has met and begun to make friends with a black girl her own age named Delie. Delie works for a hotel across the street from where Hannalee works in the fabric store.

One day, Hannalee sees some boys throw dirt on some of Delie's freshly cleaned linens that have been hung out to dry behind the hotel. Hannalee helps chase them away, and a bond begins to form between the girls, although Delie is very shy. Her shyness is eventually explained. She is a freed slave who dislikes former slave owners and Confederate soldiers. When her old master and his son ask to see her before she begins a journey back to Atlanta, she pointedly snubs them: "The work I do is a dang sight harder," she says to Henry, the younger son of her former master, "but I'm free there [in Atlanta], where I wasn't here. I don't want to see your pa or big brother, Henry. They was soldiers for the Confederacy. I don't mind seein' your mama or you, but I don't want to see them menfolk."

Her attitude sums up the attitudes of the few other black characters in the book. Some readers might wonder at any kind of friendship developing between Delie and Hannalee. Delie has plenty of reason to dislike Southern whites, and many white Southerners like Hannalee blamed blacks in part for the war that devastated their lands. But both girls are shown to be lonely for the companionship of girls their own age, and Hannalee has a well-displayed willingness to give strangers a chance to be friends; these elements make the relationship seem plausible.

The terrible suffering in Georgia wrought by the Civil War is displayed in detail in *Be Ever Hopeful, Hannalee*. Hannalee is told to be hopeful—to hope for better times—by both her mother and Delie's mother. Hope is almost all they have to go on. Delie's family lives in a black shanty camp far from Hannalee's camp. There is much misery in the camp, and it is suffering an outbreak of smallpox. In Hannalee's camp, people live in filth. The smell is awful, the flimsy shanties are poor shelter, firewood is hard to come by, and privies are even harder to find.

Many of the people survive as best they can on the food handed out at the Freedman's Bureau, which the Union set up to provide food to the many needy people in Atlanta. The Reeds refused to take the free food, preferring to pay their own way, even if they sometimes had to go hungry. This vivid picture of the aftermath of the Civil War may be unfamiliar to most readers; some of it may be shocking.

With its wealth of details provided by Beatty's careful research, *Be Ever Hopeful, Hannalee* presents what life was like for working-class people, which is to say most people, in Georgia after the war. It is a valuable antidote to novels that focus on dashing officers, elaborate balls, and desperate battles—the reigning clichés of fiction about the Civil War.



Literary Qualities

Be Ever Hopeful, Hannalee is told in the first person by the main character, Hannalee. She uses some of the slang of her time, in a dialect that would belong to an illiterate working-class person of her day. This dialect varies only slightly from the upper-class and black dialects in the novel, primarily because most of the story has to be in modern enough English that modern readers can understand what is being said. Still, Beatty goes out of her way to point out that she has made some distinctions in dialect by noting that Northerners say "madam" rather than "ma'am."

The outstanding characterization of this novel makes it a worthy work of literature. Hannalee interacts with several memorable characters, with several developed well enough to be nearly as fully rounded as Hannalee. Beatty does a good job of exploring Hannalee's thoughts and reactions. Her ignorance is what one would reasonably expect of a young adult whose view of the world a year before had not extended beyond the mill town of Roswell. Her determination to succeed is winning, but is also entirely believable because she has her moments of grave doubts, just as anybody would. She tries to be ever hopeful, but it is hard.



Themes and Characters

Characterization in *Be Ever Hopeful*, Hannalee is superior to that of *Turn Homeward*, Hannalee. In *Be Ever Hopeful*, Hannalee, Beatty studies Hannalee's family life and her struggle to make a place for herself in Atlanta. In the previous book, her adventures in the North were emphasized, and other characters were not sketched in detail, but in *Be Ever Hopeful*, Hannalee the emphasis is not on adventure but on how relationships are important to personal survival. Thus, several characters besides Hannalee are presented in detail.

Her interactions with these characters help to make Hannalee a fully rounded character. She is a strong person; her accepting of the challenge of finding work and making a living shows that.

Her admirable qualities include courage, compassion, love of family, loyalty to friends, and a love of learning. Beatty also develops her negative traits, including allowing her hatred of the Yankees to stop Hannalee from befriending a Yankee girl who needs her friendship, her naivete about what Confederates did during and after the war, and her willingness to take money from people she despises. *Be Ever Hopeful*, Hannalee is a story about her growing up and gaining a fuller understanding of her world, and in the process her better traits overcome her worse ones. Her negative traits do not fully go away, making her a credible person whose growth is believable.

Her older brother Davey is essential to the story. It is he who makes the family pick up all that they have and move to a shanty outside of Atlanta.

His unexpected failure to find work as a carpenter forces the other members of his family (except for the infant Paulina) to work. His short temper and tendency to drown his sorrows in alcohol make his family afraid for him.

This adds suspense to the novel because his actions while under the influence of alcohol are unpredictable, even to those who know him best. He might very well become a Regulator; not even Hannalee can tell for sure. He also carries some symbolic power. His tattered grey and butternut uniform and his missing arm represent the lost Confederacy. Their land was devastated; many, perhaps most, had barely the means to shelter themselves, just as Davey could barely clothe himself.

Their means for livelihoods were largely gone: Their mills and farms were reduced to ruins. Davey's efforts to remake himself, to rise out of his misery, represents Georgians' efforts to rebuild their state and their lives. He has trouble coping, as almost everybody had trouble coping.

Both Hannalee's mother and her younger brother Jem emerge as fuller characters than they had been in *Turn Homeward*, Hannalee. The mother turns out to be tough, yet vulnerable. She does what is necessary to take care of her family, but refuses to stray beyond the bounds of honesty. She works for a Yankee as a domestic, doing work she



would much rather be doing in her own home. But her example inspires Hannalee, and her courage and determination make Hannalee's character more believable by showing that Hannalee would have had the sort of upbringing to encourage her strong personality. Jem grows from a smartmouthed little boy into a self-assured young man. Although he often speaks without thinking, his openness and forthrightness make him a success finding advertising for a local newspaper.

Other characters represent different aspects of Atlanta in the aftermath of the Civil War. Amalie and her brother show what the formerly upper-class citizens of Atlanta did to survive. Lieutenant Burton serves to put a human face on the Union occupation troops, and as a plot device to reveal that Rosellen still loves Davey. Mr. Herrick, his daughter Mary Anne, and Mr. Levy represent some of the different sort of Northerners who came to Atlanta to set up businesses. Their very presence suggests their belief that Atlanta will become a boomtown. They serve to educate Hannalee about Yankees. Mr. Levy turns out to be an honest and honorable man; he not only treats Hannalee's mother well, but he is willing to exert himself to see that justice is done for a former Confederate soldier, Davey. Mr. Herrick hires Hannalee to work for him because he wants to draw native Georgians as customers to his store; he is openly honest about this when Hannalee asks why his daughter does not do the work he pays Hannalee to do. In addition, he pays her fifty cents a day, a fair wage for someone her age. He surprises her by not displaying any prejudice against her and by his insistence that she continue working for him even after her brother is accused of killing a Yankee officer.

Mary Anne is the most believable of the Northern characters. She is downright lonely in a strange city with few people her age around her. Her urgent desire to make friends with Hannalee makes her a poignant figure—even more so when Hannalee refuses to socialize with her because she is a Yankee. Observant, well educated, plucky, and impulsive, she turns out to be a match for Hannalee. Through her, Hannalee grows to have a richer understanding of the humanity of Yankees, as well as of human nature.

Delie is the last of the secondary characters to be depicted in detail. She may carry too much of a symbolic burden as the symbol of Georgia's freed slaves; it may be more than one character can do to represent the attitudes and situations of thousands of disparate people. Once a plantation slave, she now works in a hotel, doing some of the most unpleasant chores. She detests former slave owners and former Confederate soldiers and is proud of being free and earning her own money.

She is slow to warm to Hannalee, who like Mary Anne wants friends her own age, but Hannalee helps her and befriends her, knowing what to do because she observes Delie's interests.

One of the nicest touches in *Be Ever Hopeful*, Hannalee is that Mary Anne does for Hannalee what Hannalee does for Delie, thus making the Mary Anne-Hannalee relationship parallel the Hannalee-Delie relationship. The interactions of these characters enhance their portrayals and enrich the novel's themes.

Topics for Discussion

1. Should the Reeds have moved back to Roswell when they found out Davey could not find work as a carpenter in Atlanta?
2. Why would being able to read be very important to girls like Hannalee and Delie?
3. Why is Hannalee disappointed that there is no school for her to attend in Atlanta?
4. What reason is given for why Northern businessmen hire Southerners to work for them? Does the reason make sense to you?
5. Why is Hannalee surprised each time she hears of Southerners, especially Southern men, misbehaving?
6. How important is religion in *Be Ever Hopeful*, Hannalee?
7. Why is it that Hannalee has no particular prejudice against blacks?
8. What role does hope play in *Be Ever Hopeful*, Hannalee?
9. Honesty is very important to the Reeds. Why?
10. Why do the Reeds refuse to accept food from the Freedman's Bureau?
11. Why do the women in the Reed family expect Davey to take charge of family affairs? Why do they do what he says to do?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Who were the Regulators? What did they do? What happened to them?

2. Describe the three fires that burned Atlanta during the Civil War.

Who was responsible for starting them?

How were they put out? What did they do?

3. Atlanta was still a very young city at the start of the Civil War. When was it founded? How was it founded? What made it grow?

4. What were the reasons General Sherman gave for torching Atlanta and then destroying a fifty-mile-wide strip from Atlanta to Savannah? Were they good reasons?

5. Who were carpetbaggers? Why did Southerners despise them?

6. Why was a new constitution for Georgia written after the Civil War?

7. What happened to freed blacks in Georgia in the decade after the Civil War? What might happen to Delie and her family?

8. Hannalee often mentions her Cherokee ancestry. Who were the Cherokees? Where were they at the time of the events in *Be Ever Hopeful*, Hannalee?

9. Hannalee's short hair is seen as unwomanly; long hair may be important in her getting a job. What were other traits Georgian girls like Hannalee were expected to have?

10. Both Davey and his father opposed slavery, yet they fought in the Confederate Army and were very unhappy when the South lost the war.

Why did Southerners opposed to slavery still volunteer to fight for the Confederacy? What does this tell you about Southern attitudes toward the major issues of the war?

11. Are any of the buildings erected in Atlanta in Hannalee's time still standing? If so, where can they be found?

12. How well were Georgians treated by the Union in the few years immediately after the Civil War?

13. How are the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States significant? How did Georgia react to these Amendments?

14. Much of the South was devastated by the Civil War. Georgia was particularly bad off. What did the U.S.



government do to help ease the suffering in Georgia?

15. Delie's mother refers to Union Army troops as "Lincoln soldiers." Did the freed slaves really use that phrase?

What were their views on the Union Army?

16. Write a short story in which Henry Brackett comes to court Hannalee. By then, Hannalee will be four or five years older. What will she be doing? What livelihood would Henry have?

17. Most of Hannalee's family and most of their friends are illiterate.

What was the rate of literacy in Georgia in Hannalee's time? What sort of people were likeliest to have had schooling? Who were the least likely to have had schooling?

18. According to *Be Ever Hopeful*, Hannalee, the first new school in Atlanta will be for blacks only. What was the history of black education in Georgia? Why did former slaves flock to such schools? As Beatty puts it, "four generations of the same family might be in the same classroom."

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Detroit: Gale, 1993: 16-20. A summary of Beatty's life and work, noting that "Beatty left a large body of critically acclaimed work that will long continue to draw young readers into the excitement of the past."

Wilms, Denise M. Review. *Booklist* 85 (January 15, 1989): 866. "The story provides solid entertainment and a good dose of history." Finds the narrative to be somewhat routine.

Related Titles

In the last decade of her life, Beatty wrote five other novels about the Civil War besides *Be Ever Hopeful, Hannalee*.

In *Turn Homeward, Hannalee*, Beatty introduces the character Hannalee. At the novel's start, Hannalee is twelve years old. She works in a mill in Roswell, Georgia. When Union troops come, they burn down the mill and carry off the mill workers to the North, forcing them to work for Northerners.

In her notes to *Turn Homeward, Hannalee*, Beatty takes pains to point out that no one really knows what happened to the mill workers after they were taken north. *Charley Skedaddle* is about a drummer boy in the Union Army who deserts his regiment. *Eben Tyne, Powdermonkey* tells of the first battle between ironclad ships. *Jayhawker* discusses abolitionism. Each of these books displays Beatty's extensive historical research for the backgrounds of her novels.

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