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Jennifer L. Holm, Matthew Holm (Illustrations), Lark Pien (Colorist)

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Sunny Lewin has been packed off to Florida to live with her grandfather for the summer. At first she thought Florida might be fun -- it *is* the home of Disney World, after all. But the place where Gramps lives is no amusement park. It's full of . . . old people. *Really* old people.

Luckily, Sunny isn't the only kid around. She meets Buzz, a boy who is completely obsessed with comic books, and soon they're having adventures of their own: facing off against golfball-eating alligators, runaway cats, and mysteriously disappearing neighbors. But the question remains -- *why* is Sunny down in Florida in the first place? The answer lies in a family secret that won't be secret to Sunny much longer. . .

Sunny Side Up Details

Date : Published August 25th 2015 by Graphix

ISBN : 9780545741651

Author : Jennifer L. Holm , Matthew Holm (Illustrations) , Lark Pien (Colorist)

Format : Hardcover 224 pages

Genre : Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Childrens, Middle Grade, Realistic Fiction, Family, Comics, Historical, Historical Fiction

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From Reader Review **Sunny Side Up** for online ebook

Kathy says

Oh, the joys of time travel! This story takes place in 1975 and 1976, and it was so pitch perfect that I was laughing in recognition within pages.

The story itself is about Sunny's unplanned summer visit with her Gramps in Florida. Flashbacks reveal that Sunny's brother, Dale, has a drug problem that impacts his entire family. Not at all preachy, especially when Sunny and Buzz find lost cats and keep getting rewarded, this graphic novel shows the importance of talking about your feelings with someone you can trust.

My favorite scene was when Buzz's father, a Cuban chemist working as a gardener, tells Sunny to take some of his comic book collection home with her. "Take them home. As many as you want. Comics and books are no good if they sit on the shelf."

Manybooks says

As most of my friends probably well know by now, I am generally not all that much a fan of graphic novels as a genre. But after having read a few online reviews of Jennifer L. Holm's (narrative) and her brother Matthew Holm's (illustrations) Sunny Side Up I finally decided to download it on my iPad, as from the book description, this middle grade graphic novel is set in 1976 and indeed with young Sunny, also features a main protagonist who exactly like myself was ten years old in the summer of 1976 (and well, I was of course also more than curious how similar Sunny's sojourn in Florida, her personal experiences of visiting her grandfather under rather strange and trying family circumstances would be to my own as a ten year old). And indeed, while the drug and alcohol abuse issues Sunny and her family encounter with Dale (Sunny's older brother) are not at all my or even any member of my immediate family's experiences, I could still relate to a high degree and could certainly totally and utterly understand Sunny feeling as though her parents simply do not care enough to tell her the essential truth and details of why the family's traditional beach vacation has been cancelled and why she is to visit her grandfather in Florida by herself (and basically just seem to expect Sunny to accept without questions having to spend the summer with her grandfather), not really ever providing her with any of the specific reasons why, until Sunny becomes sad and depressed, not to mention that she is at the same time feeling guilty about what has been happening with regard to Dale and finally simply chooses to confront her grandfather, who thankfully and fortunately does in fact come clean so to speak and tells Sunny the whole and absolute truth regarding her visit to Florida (that her parents need to get Dale some majorly necessary and required therapy and have to totally concentrate on this) and above all that she, that Sunny has done absolutely **NOTHING WRONG** with regard to the substance abuse issues her older brother Dale is facing (and of course that none of this is in **ANY** way even remotely Sunny's fault).

Because actually, truly (and on an emotional and personal level), the entire scenario of Sunny Side Up, with Sunny being forced to visit her grandfather in Florida without either much warning or explanation, this does kind of remind me in a very much roundabout way of how we, how my family, in August of 1976 suddenly immigrated from Germany to Canada with little prior notice and that my parents were at best not very pleased that I started to cry, that I was annoyed when told we were moving and actually if truth be told they did get rather majorly angry that I even dared to voice my objections (that I told them I did not want to move to Canada), that unlike my younger siblings, who were excited, I was terrified and yes massively angrily

furious at having this sprung on me about one month prior to our departure to Canada (not to mention that I later discovered that our family had actually and in fact already immigrated in 1975, that our so-called summer vacation to Canada in 1975 had actually and unbeknownst to my siblings and me been an act of immigration, and man, do I ever even now, even in 2018 still quite with annoyance and frustration despise the fact that this was not told to us at the time, that we had in fact already immigrated to Canada in 1975).

Combined with the oh so very many historic and cultural references and allusions to the 1970s (Gee Your Hair Smells Terrific, comic books, uncomfortable sofa beds, Cuban refugees, although the 1976 US Bicentennial celebrations are of course not my experiences) I really have massively enjoyed with a huge sense of nostalgia Sunny Side Up (and I do love all the action hero comic book references that the Holms present Sunny Side Up, as I also, very much like Buzz's father Pedro, used comic books to practice and improve my English once we had arrived in Canada, and yes indeed, like Sunny, when I read my first Wonder Woman comic, I also asked myself why she was dressed in skimpy looking quasi underwear that augmented her breasts and why one could see her when she was flying her invisible jet, and ha, ha, with regard to Batman, I just remembered that I originally thought that he should not be deemed a superhero, as I got confused with the "t" sound and thought that he was not called Batman but Badman).

Ivonne Rovira says

Siblings Jennifer and Matthew Holm, best known for the Baby Mouse series, create a fabulous graphic novel that follows 11-year-old Sunshine "Sunny" Lewin when she's dispatched to spend the summer with her grandfather in West Palm Beach, Florida, in 1976. Days with Gramps at the Pine Palms retirement community are pretty boring: They're hundreds of miles from Orlando and Disney World, and there aren't any other kids at all — until Sunny meets Buzz, the Cuban gardener's son.

The Holms' *Sunny Side Up* will delight nostalgia buffs and anyone who enjoys a great coming-of-age story about the dangers of having too many secrets. And Lark Pien (American Born Chinese, Boxers & Saints) pens captivating full-color drawings that capture the era and the characters to perfection. The Holms aimed their book at tweens who grapple with a loved one beset by alcohol or drug problems, but *Sunny Side Up* should appeal to readers of all ages. Highly recommended.

Cheryl says

2 stars - it's ok. The illustrations don't add any richness or depth to the story, and so it's a very fast and simplistic read. Remember when sitcoms were mocked for tackling and resolving a challenging issue in 24 minutes? This is even more, erm, concise, as it tackles Cuban immigrants, senility, cigarette addiction, feminism (the girl discovers comics and, while she focuses on different elements than the boy, does decide that she's Batman, not Wonder Woman, when they play), and the Big issue.

The only reason I'm glad I read it, tbh, is because I'm 2 years older than Sunny, and I remember a lot of the references. The shampoo Gee Your Hair Smells Terrific really did smell good, and I wish I could find it again. And the painted fire hydrants for the Bicentennial were actually delightful. Etc.

I know some of you, my friends, are old enough to remember 1976 - you might want to read* this just for the nostalgia. What do you remember from the 70s?

*I was going to say skim, but reading would take about 5 minutes longer than skimming, so just read it. It's not a bad book, not a waste of a little time.

Shoa Khan says

A breezy Middle Grade single-sitting summer read about a girl who goes to Florida to spend the summer with her Gramps.

The book is semi-autobiographical, features nice colored illustrations

and is targeted to help kids cope with a close family member or friend dealing with substance abuse.

It took me more than one sitting though, coz I was jet lagged and kept passing out! :P
BOOM!

Ms. Yingling says

E ARC from Edelweiss Above the Treeline

In this graphic novel, Sunny is ten years old in 1976, and is sent from her home in Pennsylvania to spend time with her grandfather at his retirement community, Pine Palms, in Florida. There are few children her age there, although she does befriend Buzz, who is the son of the groundskeeper. She and Buzz read comic books, rescue old lady's cats for pocket money, and go swimming. With her grandfather, Sunny goes to Early Bird Special Dinners and has to put up with the hide-a-bed in his apartment, and his smoking, which he tries to hide. In flashbacks, we learn about Sunny's much older brother, Dale, who runs with a bad crowd and drinks and smokes. Sunny loves her brother but not the way he is acting, especially since he was the reason she was sent to her grandfather's.

Strengths: I was ten in 1976, and in 1974 my family went to Disney World and also visited my father's cousin Amilda, who lived in New Smyrna Beach. This hit every possible nostalgia button for me! On top of that, it addresses a serious concern (families struggling with addictions) in a way that is appropriate and accessible for younger children. Like Smile and El Deafo, this will fly off the shelf. Sad subjects are made eminently readable when accompanied by brightly colored pictures.

After I finished this, I wanted to read this again. That NEVER happens.

Weaknesses: More explanation of exactly Dale had trouble with would have helped me. Plus, Ms. Holm TOTALLY needs to write a historical novel set in 1976. Man. Made me miss those red, white and blue plaid pants I had!

What I really think: Buying two copies. At least.

Kathy Martin says

Graphic novel tells the story of Sunny who is ten and sent to spend the summer at her Grandfather's in a retirement community in Florida while her parents deal with her older brother Dale's drug addiction. She meets a new friend who is a big fan of comic books about superheroes. The two kids help find lost cats and have other adventures with the old people. Sunny is sad about keeping secrets and feels her brother's addiction is her fault. It doesn't help that her grandfather said he quit smoking but Sunny finds cigarettes all over the house. Finally she confronts him and is comforted by him about her guilt about her brother.

Rachel Reads Ravenously says

4 stars!

A cute story with some more serious undertones. *Sunny Side Up* is the story of a young girl who is sent to Florida to spend the summer with her grandpa. Placed in the 70's, she finds Florida to be boring. Meanwhile she flashes back to months before where her and her family watched her teenage brother spiral out of control with substance abuse.

I think this is an important book for tweens to have available as they can relate to Sunny. It also shows addiction as something that shouldn't be hidden and encourages young readers to seek help if someone they know suffers from it.

Stef says

3.5 stars

Finished this one as well! Just in time too :) Happy New Year everybody!

Melissa says

Anyone who thinks that nothing serious or good happens in graphic novels and that they're not worth reading needs to reconsider. (I'm looking at my daughter's 3rd grade teacher here.)

David Schaafsma says

A book by the prolific Jennifer Holms and her artist brother Matt, who also do stuff for younger kids like the very successful Babymouse and Squish. Jennifer does a range of books for different ages. This one I would say works best for 3rd through 5th graders, based on my limited family sample of just that age group. Well,

the boys read this, not the girl (yes, they have read *Nimona* and *Lumberjanes* and other "girl" books and liked them a lot), and Henry (8) gave it 5 stars, Harry 3.5, though both claim they liked it a lot.

I thought it was pretty good. The art is okay, with maybe my favorite aspect of the whole book the coloring, done by colorist Pien, of American Born Chinese fame. The story is good: Sunny, ten, is sent for the summer to live with her grandpa, who lives in a retirement village, where she still manages to meet a boy her age, Buzz, who reads superhero comics with her. The big secret, which I won't bother to reveal, pertains to a family health issue, and is not handled particularly well. It becomes more of an issue of honesty about how one feels rather than the issue itself. There's something missing in our dealing with this issue as readers. So I might have given this two stars, except for the enthusiastic Henry, and . . . the voice of Sunny, related with a good dose of sense of humor. I liked her just fine. She's no Lumberjane or *Nimona* or Ms. Marvel for edgy sassy character and dialogue, but this is a younger book, she's ten, and she might get there when she is thirteen.

Julie says

My 9-year-old says "three stars," and I agree.

Tracy The Great says

I think it was a great book because it was really interesting! I recommend this book to anyone who likes comics!

Raina says

Yay, good, great for the Telgemeier/Bell/Gownley fans. Although the Holm team are stars in their own right (heh heh, see what I did there?).

This one got darker than I was expecting. I enjoyed the Florida Retirement Center from a Kids Perspective story, and then it got to the potentially triggering content, and it felt a little out of the blue (even though they've been alluding to it throughout), tone-wise. I liked her friendships with the other kid on campus, and the residents themselves.

I suppose it was pretty realistic, in that way, though. Life isn't always consistent in tone.

Anyway, yes, good. Give it to the burgeoning young GN fans. Like.

Dov Zeller says

"Sunny Side Up" is the story of Sunny's summer stay with her grandfather in FL when she is around ten years old, and things are tough at home. The story goes back and forth in time to show events leading up to her trip to FL, which starts out shaky, but gets better as she makes a friend her age and goes on lots of

adventures and reads a lot of comic books, and as she gets closer to her grandfather and finds herself more and more able to connect with him and the his peers at Pine Palms (a retirement home). This book was between a 3 and 4 for me. I wasn't completely convinced by the 70s nostalgia or the organization of the novel (chapters going back and forth in time in the particular way they did) and at times I wondered if it went deep enough in terms of emotional content, though it did address Sunny's internal struggles directly and delicately. It was the confident story arc, and most of all the humor and sweetness of developing friendships that compelled me to go for the four.
