

My Friend Flicka

Mary O'Hara

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Ken McLaughlin, a young boy growing up on a ranch, is determined to earn his father's permission to raise a horse on his own. Ken has always been a dreamer, a fact that has always irritated his strict, business-like father. The summer when Ken is finally granted his father's reluctant permission to select and raise his own horse, Ken is beyond elated. But when Ken chooses to take in a wild, trouble-making, mustang yearling, his father loses all hope in him and the young filly, Flicka. Over the course of the summer, much drama grows as Ken begins making radical decisions to save Flicka as her health deteriorates. Everything Ken, his father, and Flicka go through during the summer converges at one point when both Ken's and Flicka's health are in danger: everything depends on Ken's father's decision and whether or not he wants to save both his son and the wild horse.

My Friend Flicka is a wonderful fiction novel aimed at junior high students. It is an easy and enjoyable read, but oriented very strongly towards horse lovers. In the context of the novel, there are references to horses and the technicalities of ranch life on every page. As a reader who has a great interest in this subject, these characteristics made the book even more enjoyable to me. I would throw caution to those who aren't as passionate, though.

Aside from the focus of horses, the overall presentation of *My Friend Flicka* is very appealing. The characters are very relatable and O'Hara gives them all such strong, true feelings a reader can't help but feel for. The plotline is engaging and compelling, always teasing readers into finishing the page, chapter, or even the entire book before putting it down. The final message readers take out of this story is strong and loving. I enjoyed this book much more than I anticipated. This is definitely a story I would suggest to animal lovers.