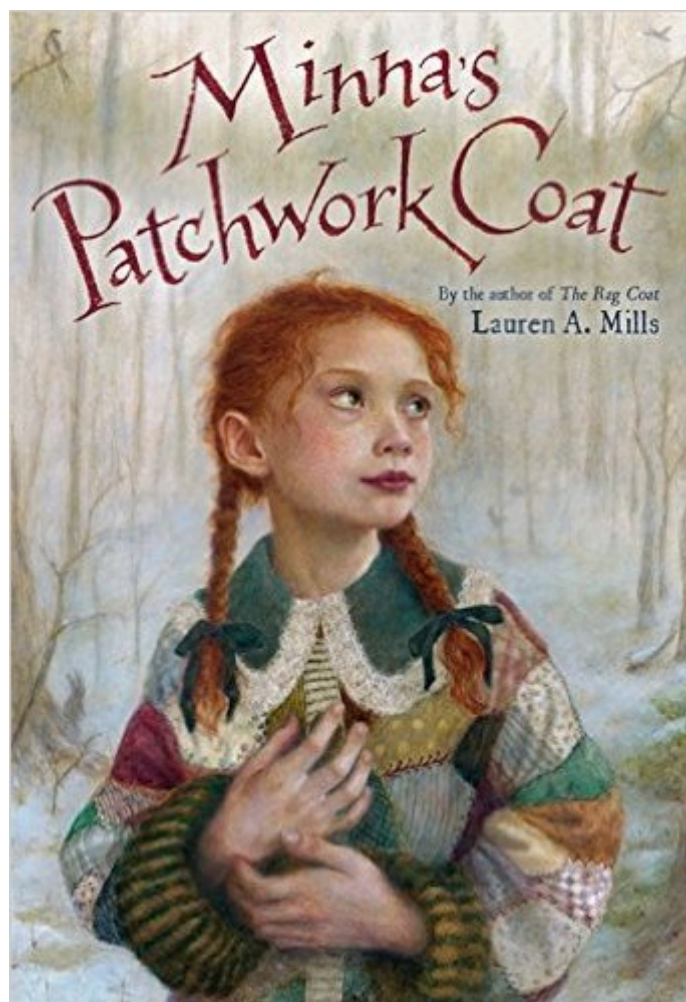


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# Minna's Patchwork Coat



## Synopsis

In this charming historical novel, acclaimed artist Lauren A. Mills reimagines her beloved picture book, *The Rag Coat*, with fifty delicate pencil illustrations and an expanded story about a resilient little girl, her patchwork coat, and how the two bring a community together. Minna and her family don't have much in their small Appalachian cabin, but "people only need people," Papa always reminds her. Unable to afford a winter coat to wear to school, she's forced to use an old feed sack to keep her warm. Then Papa's terrible cough from working in the coal mines takes him away forever, and Minna has a hard time believing that anything will be right again...until her neighbors work tirelessly to create a coat for her out of old fabric scraps. Now Minna must show her teasing classmates that her coat is more than just rags--it's a collection of their own cherished memories, each with a story to share.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers (November 3, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 031640621X

ISBN-13: 978-0316406215

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #691,713 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #307 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Where We Live > Country Life](#) #535 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Prejudice & Racism](#) #653 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Death & Dying](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

This is a beautifully written and illustrated book which deals with timeless themes. Although the story takes place a long time ago in a rural setting, girls still have a tendency to gang up on each other and be mean. Kids still struggle with a parent's death, with poverty. Older siblings still take care of younger siblings. Racial tension does exist in this world. Kids still love something that was specially handmade for them that other kids make fun of. And many kids still feel their best when in

the woods and in nature. Age categories don't much matter here. Appealing to many ages and many kinds of people.

I read my mother's copy of this book and have been following its evolution through the author's posts on social media. I hope to receive this book for Christmas. I share Ms. Mills' fondness for the Dolly Parton song "Coat of Many Colors" and I am delighted that Mills chose to develop backstory for this musical vignette. In particular, I love the way she has stitched the human need for stories - our own and everyone else's - into the fabric of Minna's coat. She is wearing her entire community, and the knowledge that even some of the bullies and creeps have their wounds and secret joys. Once she learns of these, her attitude toward these children changes; once they realize she knows their stories, their attitude toward her changes as well. We all long to be understood, and it is understanding that defeats the rancor and establishes the field for accord, if not friendship. Barry Lopez, in his stunning short story "Crow and Weasel" says we all have an obligation to learn to tell stories, and to hold stories told to us by others. We need stories to keep us safe, and like water and salt, we need stories to survive. Viktor Frankl, author and psychotherapist [Man's Search For Meaning] says that no matter how devastating our situation, no matter how thoroughly we are trapped or crushed, we always retain control over our attitude toward that situation - the way we map meaning onto our experience. And that this meaning comes wrapped in stories. Minna's situation is dire, yet her joy and love are abundant because she is loved herself. I teach in rural West Virginia, not too far from where Ms. Mills sets this story. Sadly, the kind of grinding poverty depicted in this 19th century tale is very much alive and well here. So, too, are the deep prejudices of the kind that play a central role in this novel. I would absolutely recommend this book to my colleagues as a read-aloud and as a chapter book for fourth grade and up. I want the students here to make a coat of many colors that their entire class could wear [metaphorically] and share. They need to learn the stories they hold in common, even if the characters are particular to each one of them. Absent fathers, addiction, foster care, parents working multiple jobs, frustration and isolation. I also want them to learn how owning those stories can transform them - they can become the actors in their own futures instead of passively subsiding into an unsatisfying or even deadly narrative. This novel shows them one way to do this and classroom discussion of this story will teach them other strategies, including ones they did not know they held within themselves. Lauren Mills is a multiple award-winning illustrator whose portraits are especially powerful. In this novel, she has shown that, just as she can lay down a pencil line that perfectly captures a gesture, a soft tension in the face or hands, she can lay down language, too. As a writer and artist myself, I can see how her visual arts

skills have made her language skills vivid and precise, with just the right details to tell us exactly what we need to know for the story to breathe. Treat yourself to this book, but especially if you are a teacher. Or a quilter. Or were once a poor child.

The book is beautifully written (and beautifully illustrated!). The author has done a tremendous amount of research about the lives and cultures of her characters, their time and place. Magnificent!

Really enjoyed this old-fashioned story but the book was in such poor condition that I had to go out and buy a good, clean copy for a gift. I have repaired this one as best as I can and will keep it for myself. Lovely story but poor customer service.

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