



Virginia

Susan Hughes

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I took hold of her hands, their bones tiny and birdlike, squeezed them gently. I felt like shaking them, shaking her into the panic I was feeling.? Virginia, I don't understand.?

Fourteen-year-old Ivy is flabbergasted when her childhood friend Virginia claims that she has been visited by an angel who has asked her to bear the child of God. As Ivy struggles to understand and help her friend, she uncovers more secrets, including an apocalyptic plot being devised by Virginia's weird brother, Paul. Ivy suspects Paul's activities must connect in some way to Virginia's claim but she's uncertain how. Soon Ivy finds herself caught up in a chain of events she has no control over.

Virginia Details

Date : Published March 1st 2010 by Kids Can Press

ISBN : 9781554533060

Author : Susan Hughes

Format : Hardcover 288 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Realistic Fiction

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From Reader Review Virginia for online ebook

Rachel Seigel says

As children, Virginia and Ivy used to play together, but drifted apart after the death of Virginia's father from a heart attack. Then one day out of the blue, Virginia confides an unbelievable secret to Ivy: She has been visited by an angel and asked to carry the child of God. Is this possible, or do the secretive and somewhat sinister activities of Virginia's oldest brother Paul have something to do with her belief? What Ivy discovers will terrify her, but also lead her to question her own faith and the possibilities of miracles.

Readers will find this to be an engaging and thought provoking novel, and it is certainly worth the read, but because of the controversial nature of the subject matter, it is best suited for an older high school audience, or perhaps an adult audience for independent reading. There are a lot of difficult questions that arise from this book, making it best suited for a book club or lit circle environment.

Paula says

Wow! What a wonderful surprise -- a young adult book with Big Ideas. Virginia takes on faith, fanaticism, terrorism, family (what makes them dissolve and cohere), adolescence, and possibly the biggest "what if" there is. The narrator, Ivy, is a normal/good kid trying to survive her childhood while exercising her considerable brain and seeking a measure of happiness. Her friend, Virginia, is both strong and adrift. As extraordinary as is the mix of people and events, the story is completely believable.

Be forewarned that Virginia and Ivy spend a lot of time feeling like they can't breathe, and the reader, too, finds their relentless internal monologues a bit suffocating. I would have been happy if Joe had entered the story sooner. We needed him!

I prize originality in a book -- perhaps over all other qualities -- and Virginia has it. I am still asking myself about one scene, one moment, brimming with ambiguity. Was it all in Ivy's mind? Virginia's mind? a hallucination? a miracle? I'm kind of happy not to be sure.

Heather Pearson says

Ivy Morell is fourteen and has just started highschool. Her elder sister, Katie, left home as she could no longer deal with their alcoholic mother and distant father. Now she is trying to adjust to a new school as well as all those other 'issues' that confront teens. One day, seemingly out of the blue her neighbour, Virginia Donato calls and says she wants to talk.

Virginia is the youngest of six siblings in a deeply religious family. What could she possibly have to say to Ivy, whom she hasn't really been friends with in years. She confides to Ivy that she has been visited by an angel and that she wants Ivy to be a witness to what has been asked of her.

My first reaction was that this was going to be a book about religion. I kept reading and found that while Virginia and her family are religious that is only part of the story. The bigger issue is what to do when you

have given your word to a friend, and then you realize that you are going to have to break that promise. Who do you tell and how much do you tell. Ivy took her promise to her friend very seriously and did intend to keep it even if she questioned whether it was true or all in Ivy's imagination, but she knew that Virginia needed help.

I thought that the way Ivy approached this dilemma was quite in keeping with a fourteen year old. As an adult I would have done differently, but then again, Ivy doesn't have years and decades of experience. I suspect that most teens find themselves in this type of situation time and again and they don't know where to turn.

Sandra Stiles says

Virginia was a strange book. Once I started reading it I couldn't put it down. Imagine you have a neighbor who at one time was a friend and you haven't spent much time around them for a few years. Then imagine they call you up and invite you over. They have something to tell you. Would you go?

Ivy has just received such a call from her neighbor Virginia. When Virginia claims she has been visited by the angel Gabriel, Ivy suspects it has something to do with the new "secret" church Virginia's brother has started. With the help of Virginia's brother Joe, Ivy sets out to help Virginia.

I grew up in a very strict and strong Christian home. However the things that Virginia's brother was preaching didn't remind me of churches I attended. It reminded me more of the churches David Koresh and other such people have created.

I felt sorry for the problems that were going on in Ivy's life, as well as all the garbage she was dealing with trying to help her friend. The story is set up so the reader is left wondering if Ivy had truly received a visit from the angel Gabriel or was the stress of things she knew too much and this is how her mind handled it. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes a good mystery.

Taylor McBroom says

Virginia was a strange novel for me. It has a lot of religious themes, and, well, I'm not religious. It took me a while to separate my beliefs from the story. Once I did it wasn't a terrible book, just not my thing.

For me this book lacked the compelling factor that most books have. Until I was about 3/4's in I could have stopped reading and not have regretted it at all. It was slow going, a lot of build up, which was probably meant to be suspenseful but didn't work for me. I didn't think that Ivy, the main character, was very interesting.. The whole book revolves around Virginia and I never really got to know Ivy without the whole mess. At the beginning there's a little bit of normal high school-ness, but that's all dropped not far in.

I liked the way that at the end of every chapter there was a little piece of Virginia's point of view, told from third person. It was interesting to know what she was thinking while everything was happening, and to know her side of the story.

The relationship between Ivy and Joe was a nice addition, and was one of the reasons why I thought that the end was more compelling than the beginning. Joe, unlike the rest of his family, is normal. Normalcy was a nice change.

Sadly, this book wasn't for me. I'm sure that there are some other readers who would enjoy it, but the religious aspect through me off.

Cindy says

I tried so hard to seperate my beliefs and such from this book but it's so rich in religious elements that I couldn't do it. The next bearer of the child of God? Really? It just wasn't for me for a number of reasons that I won't go into here.

While the book wasn't so bad and it was written in a way that I almost WISH the topic hadn't been so religion dependent. IT brings up a lot of questions though I wouldn't readily throw the book at a 13/14 year old. I think it's a YA book for adults. I think I need to rest on this one.

Brooke says

made me really think about my faith in god

Alison says

What would happen if a 15 year old girl claimed to have been visited by the angel Gabriel and told that she was chosen to bear the next child of God?

This is the story of Virginia Donato, as told by Ivy, her childhood friend. Ivy and Virginia were close friends as girls, but not particularly close as teenagers, which made it all the more strange when Virginia asked Ivy to come over to her house one day. She said that she had something important, but not terrible, to tell her. Virginia claims that the angel Gabriel came to her bedroom.

"I've been chosen to have a child," she said in a low voice. "A child that will come from God."

At first, Ivy thought the worst. Did someone rape her? Was she delusional? Was she a mixed up girl trying to cover up an unwanted pregnancy with a wild story about an immaculate conception? Virginia's large family had always been deeply religious, attending the local Catholic church. After the death of Virginia's father, her eldest brother, Paul, took his place as patriarch of the family. Paul had different ideas about religion, and opened up his own secret church in the vacant house behind theirs. Paul preached about the End of Time and the final judgement. Virginia and her brother, Joe, did not attend Paul's church and stayed out of his way, until Ivy made some terrifying discoveries, with Virginia's visit with the angel only being the beginning. Now it was up to Joe and Ivy to find out the truth about what was going on in the Donato family.

I'll be completely honest, I don't know how I would classify this novel. Even though there are definitely spiritual and Christian themes, none of them are true to their foundation, and blatantly misinterpreted by some of the characters in the book, so I don't think I would consider this Christian Fiction. While it posed some interesting questions of faith, there were few answers. I also don't know if I would recommend it to a YA reader. The themes of a religious cult, alcoholic parents, among other things, may not be appropriate for some readers. If your teen wants to read Virginia, I highly recommend reading it with her, and discussing it. I do think the questions Susan Hughes presents her readers are thought-provoking and worthy of discussion.

Unfortunately, the end of the book left me with a huge question mark and too many loose ends. I found the storyline interesting and compelling, but it never quite took me where I wanted it to go. I enjoyed it as I read it, but there was not enough to satisfy me in the end. I think I may need to talk to someone about the many themes of this book, so if you've read it, give me a shout.

Thona says

I had assumed that Paul was the perpetrator behind the Gabriel angel thing but damn the whole fundamentalist occult thing had me spinning

Shruthi says

I don't even know what to say. Maybe I should start reading the synopsis of the book before I read it.

Virginia is about a girl named (you guessed it!) Virginia. Well and Ivy, but while Ivy was the protagonist of this book she had no actual personality. At least, Virginia has the whole vaguely insane, very religious thing going for her.

Virginia thinks an angel visited her in the middle of the night and wants to impregnate her. Ivy thinks she's crazy. Paul, Virginia's brother, is a religious zealot who has problems. Joe, Virginia's other brother (she has 5 siblings...) is rather normal.

This whole book is just Ivy trying to figure out what weird Paul is up to and trying to prove crazy Virginia that she's not having angel babies AND romancing normal Joe in her spare time. And did I mention Ivy's on track, her sister's getting married, she just started high school and her mom's an alcoholic. There was way too

many elements to the book but not a single one of them was focused on enough. Paul was a one-dimensional caricature of a person who went through no character development. We never find out if Virginia is having angel babies or not. Joe and Ivy's romance felt forced but neither of them has any sort of personality so I guess it works.

Perhaps I am not giving this book enough credit. It was surprisingly well written and had a decent pace. Ivy's family dynamics could have been interesting if it was given more screen time and a better backstory.

Rating: 15/100

Age: 12 & up

Warnings: Cults, religious extremism, angel/god babies, alcohol addictions, Paul, suicide, bad parenting

Debbie says

Virginia is an odd telling of a tale which juxtaposes the story of a "regular" dysfunctional family with another family descending into religious extremism. In spite of one or two dialogue klunkers and at least one (unimportant) discrepancy in plot, this was a riveting book.

The portrayal of Paul was convincing as the charismatic driver behind an extreme plot.

It was also a welcome change from the "Homeland" portrayal of Muslim-as-terrorist. The story was an interesting depiction of one man's ability to convince others that his insane idea would justify the ends.

That said, it might be too complex to be appreciated by any but the most sophisticated young adult readers.

Tianna Green says

For full disclosure I received the book for free through Goodreads First Reads.

I just couldn't get into it. I really tried. To me, it seemed like the book was moving really slow.

Kelly says

I 100 page'd it.

This was, hands down, one of the strangest books I've ever read.

I'm not even sure how this is a teen novel.

That said, it's actually quite well written and the pacing quick. But the storyline went beyond weird for me.

Rachel says

Ivy and Virginia have been friends and neighbors since they were kids. Although they have never been very close, Virginia confides in Ivy that she believes she has been visited by an angel who has asked her to carry God's baby. Ivy understandably doubts this news and begins to question her friend's sanity and the safety of Virginia's home. Everyone in Virginia's family is acting strangely and each member seems to be harboring a

secret. Virginia's mom is muttering to herself, her older brother Paul is holding secret religious meetings in the house next door and the older sisters are trying to keep Ivy away from Virginia. Although this all sounds like prime material for an excellent young adult book, the reality is Virginia is not excellent. The writing, particularly the dialogue, is slow and repetitive. There are references to crows throughout the entire book, but I was at a loss to find any literary meaning for all the bird talk. The plot does build slightly toward the end when Ivy discovers a threatening and dangerous plan by the zealous older brother Paul and convinces another brother Joe to join her in stopping him. There are definite Christian undertones to this book but I would not say it had a Christian message nor would I recommend it to teens looking for Christian fiction. There are other background issues (alcoholism, abuse) that may offend these types of readers. Overall Virginia is not worth a read but if you got a teen who wants a psychological mystery with religious undertones (because there are tons of YA readers like that?) then here is a book they may enjoy.

Jayla Johnson says

Thought-provoking, but sometimes it was slow and boring.
