



Indigo's Star

Hilary McKay

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IT'S BACK TO SCHOOL FOR THE START OF A NEW TERM, AND THE ECCENTRIC CASSONS ARE UP TO THEIR OLD TRICKS!

Indigo, having just recovered from a bout of mononucleosis, must return to school after missing an entire semester. Only his younger sister and loyal sidekick, Rose, knows why he's dreading it so much. As it turns out, the school bullies are eagerly awaiting Indigo's return so that they can pick up where they left off -- flushing his head in the toilet. But Indigo hasn't counted on meeting Tom, an American student who is staying with his grandmother in England for the year. With his couldn't-care-less attitude and rock-and-roll lifestyle, Tom becomes Indigo's ally, and together they work to take back the school. Meanwhile, eight-year-old Rose is desperately trying to avoid wearing horrible glasses, nineteen-year-old Caddy is agonizing over her many suitors, Saffy is working overtime with her best friend, Sarah, to protect Indigo from the gang, and with their father, Bill, in London at his art studio, their mother, Eve, is just trying to stay on top of it all!

Indigo's Star Details

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From Reader Review Indigo's Star for online ebook

Brianne says

Actual rating: 6/5 stars because this book is perfect.

I had two other books on the go when I started *Indigo's Star*, and yet I finished *Indigo's Star* first because I couldn't put it down. *Saffy's Angel* was great, but I find Saffy to be the least interesting Casson child, and spending this novel with Indigo and Rose was a treat.

I felt like an honorary member of the Casson family as I read. I laughed out loud with them, I was angry for them, and I cried on their behalf.

Again, this book is perfect. The plot is engaging and well-paced, the characters are rich, and the humour and emotion are real. It's a beautiful book.

Beth says

Rose graduates from notes to letters in *Indigo's Star*, and it's equally hilarious.

That said, I enjoyed this book less than *Saffy's Angel*. I still liked it a lot, and it made me laugh out loud quite a few times, but it's a much clearer precursor to *Binny for Short*. There were very similar plot elements, and the overlap was disconcerting. There were some decidedly hazy details, too: did Eve and Bill really get divorced without telling Rose - or was Samantha a not-very-funny joke? How old is Derek exactly? Rose's perspective isn't too clear, which is realistic, but confusing, too.

The next book is about Rose, and I've already got it on hold (though I'm wondering if Rose will be best in smaller doses).

Pirate Queen says

Indigo Casson, the third of four Casson children, stars in this sequel to *Saffy's Angel* (2002). Having just returned to school from a month-long illness, Indigo befriends an American student who has become the target of the school bully, a position once held by Indigo.

Characters: Caddie- in college

Saffy- 13 or 14

Indigo- 11

Rose- 8

Sarah- friend of Saffy's /disabled/confined to a wheelchair

Tom- American friend/plays the guitar

Eve- mom/artist

Bill- father/ artist/ lives in London

Question: Why would the author make such a big deal about Indigo having recovered from mono? What part does this play in the story? (couldn't really tell but she spend so much time focusing on it that I'm trying to figure it out)

What is the significance of the title?

Why does Rose bond with Tom so much?

How should the bully structure have been handled differently? What role did the headmaster [principal] play (or not play) in the story?

TheBookSmugglers says

Indigo's Star is the second book in the Casson family series and is more of a companion novel than a proper sequel to Saffy's Angel – although it could be read as stand-alone but to do so would deprive you of the delights of that first book. Believe me: you don't want that to happen.

This particular entry focuses on Indigo, the sole boy in the family as he is about to go back to school after a long illness. It soon emerges that before getting ill, Indigo was being bullied at school. Only his youngest sister (Permanent) Rose knows what happens and they are both understandably anxious about his returning to school. But there is a new student, Tom-from- America, who gets the unwanted attention away from Indigo. Ultimately, the two become friends with a little help from Rose.

I say that the novel "focus on Indigo" but this is not quite correct as it has become clear to me that this is an ensemble series. As such, as Indigo and Tom become fast friends, the entire Casson family share the spotlight too. Caddy, now in college is still entangled with former driving instructor Michael but keeps coming back home with potential new boyfriends (ore are they?); Saffron and her best friend Sarah organise to take care of both Indigo and Rose; as the latter is desperately trying to get their (increasingly absent) father's attention.

Back when I reviewed Saffy's Angel I said how that book had made me think of the way that literature can engage meaningfully and smartly with difficult topics. Here, there is bullying (as well as complicity and silence), absent-minded parenting as well as absent-for-real parenting, divorce and moving on and how these affect children. As an adult it is so easy to forget how seemingly simple things can torment children and this book reminded me of that by portraying this in a very compassionate way.

The book is also interspersed with the most hilarious letters from Rose to Bill. They provide her own version of everything that is happening in their lives but with her choosing to stress or reinforce the elements she feels will scare Bill into coming back home:

"Darling Daddy,

This is Rose.

So flames went all up the kitchen wall. Saffron called the fire brigade and the police came too to see if it was a trick and the police woman said to Saffron Here You Are Again because of when I got lost having my glasses checked. But I was with Tom whose grandmother is a witch on top of the highest place in town. Love, Rose.”

In the relationship between Rose and her father is where I think, Indigo’s Star is at the height of its cleverness-meets-heartfelt: because of course, Rose’s letters are an indirect plea for help that are often sadly ignored by Bill. Until he comes through at Rose’s greatest time of need –in that very moment, Rose understands her father completely and sees both the good and the bad in him. It is a very special and powerful moment in the story when she fully sees Bill and understands he quite possibly will never truly understand her. Which is heartbreaking in itself but all the more so when Rose is clearly the more artistic child of the family, something that she could truly share with her artist father but can’t.

Speaking of artistic tendencies, it is awesome to see how art, emotion and family intertwine here. This is true when it comes to Tom and Indigo playing the guitar and how music connects them both; or how Eve becomes more engaged with their community; and especially how Rose paints the picture of her family on the kitchen wall and as the story progresses, so do the painting with new additions like Sarah and Tom and with Bill always on the outskirts.

This idea of a fluid family that embraces new members as they come along is the core of these books with the understanding that blood ties are important but so are the ties of friendship and true understanding and bonding:

“There are all sorts of families,” Tom’s grandmother had remarked, and over the following few weeks Tom became part of the Casson family, as Micheal and Sarah and Derek-from-the-camp had done before him.

He immediately discovered that being a member of the family was very different from being a welcome friend. If you were a Casson family member, for example, and Eve drifted in from the shed asking, “Food? Any ideas? Or shall we not bother?” then you either joined in the search of the kitchen cupboards or counted the money in the housekeeping jam jar and calculated how many pizzas you could afford. Also, if you were a family member you took care of Rose, helped with homework (Saffron and Sarah were very strict about homework), unloaded the washing machine, learned to fold up Sarah’s wheelchair, hunted for car keys, and kept up the hopeful theory that in the event of a crisis Bill Casson would disengage himself from his artistic life in London and rush home to help.”

Finally, I also love how there are no strict gender roles here, how all the members of the family have interests that are not dependent on their gender and how they are all equally protective, emotive and active participants on the Casson comfort machine.

Indigo’s Star is funny, moving and thoughtful featuring amazingly subtle, complex and clever writing. This is becoming one of the best Middle Grade series I have ever read.

Felicity says

I read the first book of this series a long time ago so I was concerned I had forgotten what had happened and who the characters were. Actually I didn't need to worry. This book does a tiny bit of re-capping but also stands alone very well.

Indigo has had glandular fever and is going back to school for the first time for a term. He is dreading it and only Rose his younger sister knows it's because of a gang of bullies. But Indigo meets Tom who is new in his year which changes everything. Saffy and Sarah are knuckling down with homework and also kick ass with some bullies. Caddy is failing to dump many boyfriends and keeps bringing them home and Rose is permanently annoyed with her absent dad, is working on a picture in the kitchen and writes very amusing letters. Eve is hilariously bad at food shopping and a brilliant portrayal of an artist who has skill but not many life skills.

I really enjoyed this. There is much British humour which is very funny and you get a clear picture of all of the characters. I found it easy to relate to and many topics that are relevant for teens such as bullying, relationships and families are portrayed and dealt with in many ways. I also liked the character of Tom who started as an outsider and learned to appreciate family values.

An easy read with eccentric characters and brilliant humour.

Jacob Proffitt says

While not as laugh-out-loud hilarious as the first book, this is a great follow-up to Saffy's Angel. Indigo is the quiet child of the family, the one with the most (any) reserve. It's no surprise, then, that he has difficulties with bullies at school. Indigo's classmates form the backdrop to the story, but I was glad to find that they weren't its heart.

The story picks up with Indigo returning to school after an extended convalescence. While the bullies reassert themselves, we meet Tom--a new kid in school recently arrived from America. When Saffy and Sarah put Indigo off limits (for certain values of off-limits), the gang turns, quite naturally, to the next available outsider. Tom is happy to oblige.

I confess that I didn't really like Tom very much. He's a brash young liar who doesn't really care for anybody else and is happy to let them know it. Indigo, being who he is, can't keep himself from trying to help Tom, even though he has made it clear that he doesn't want help any more than he needs it. Of course, things proceed in standard Casson fashion from there.

While I didn't like Tom (and still don't, really), I very much appreciated his growing friendship with Indigo. You know going in, of course, that they will end up friends. Trust McKay to map out a non-standard, but completely natural, path to get there, however. What could have been a trite exposition about standing up for outsiders and finding value in our differences ends up as a deeper exploration of love and friendship and absorbing change without becoming broken. In the end, I came to like Tom for the sake of his relationship with Indigo (and Rose). And that, at least in the message delivered very cleverly by the end, is exactly perfect.

There is a lot of ancillary activity in the rest of the Casson family in the course of the story--including disruptions that are rather fundamental. McKay isn't afraid to shake things up and mix the bitter with the sweet any more than she is reluctant to mix the melancholy with the hilarious. I'm still not sure what I think of some of the changes, but I'm grateful that McKay has the fortitude to make them. My heart goes out to poor Rose, though. I'm really glad that her novel is next. I can't wait to get started.

Carissa says

To be honest, at the beginning of reading this book, I thought it had no point. I was confused if what the point was, and where they were taking it. I had a deep feelings that Tom was a main character, but I brushed him off. As soon as they started talking about him more, I finally discovered that he had more of a point in the book. Because of that, it was sort of confusing at first, for I have for I have not read Saffy's Angel before this. But, I enjoyed this book, and decided to give t a shot after a friend recommended it to me. I think it was written very well, but there was few downsides.

First of all, I feel the author just used the fact of Indigo having mono as an excuse in the story to make the beginning interesting. I mean, they don't talk about Indigo having mono after a couple chapter of when school started, and I think they could've been more elaborate on the whole 'mono' thing.

Second of all, they could've introduced Tom earlier. I didn't even feel Tom had an important part at the beginning, I just thought he was a side character that helped Indigo.

I thought this story was going to be more about Indigo having mono to be honest, but I liked how it turned out better than the whole having mono.

Besides the part of Tom not being introduced earlier, I think Tom was very well developed, and Indigo had a major part in his life. I liked how they rolled out the whole 'being from America' thing with him. The guitar thing was also amazing. It describes very well getting used to a new place, for me having moved to different schools a lot in my life, I felt Tom was pretty relatable.

Overall, I think this book deserves four stars, since there was few downsides, and many upsides. The story played out well, and was cleverly written.

I hope you have, or will read this book, it is definitely worth it!

Kristi says

I was a little worried at the start that i wouldn't be able to handle the family situation, just due to being sensitive right now. But the author didn't go deep enough to make it hurt too much.

The book was more about "Rose" and her anger and her constant trying to bring her father home and make them a family. Instead he misinterprets everything, even when he does return he doesn't stay. and I could be misquoting but it seemed to me that Rose was saying often "He was bad and he was good" and that you take what you can from people. I don't know that i had indigo all figured out and that is ok, even good maybe. It was a little to perfect to have tom go back the way he did, while making the 180 in about 4 seconds. But over all just deep enough to have something but not deep enough to bring you down. Very good book, and probably would be more meaningful if read as a kid.

Owen says

I preferred this book to its predecessor Saffy's Angel. The story is messier in a life-like way: like Rose's painting, it revolves around the changing relationships between family members.

Sue says

A book for older children or younger teens about the delightful and disorganised Casson family. Indigo has been off school for some time with glandular fever, and although he is now recovered he doesn't want to go back to school at all, because he has been badly bullied. However, at last he must return... and to his surprise he meets a new boy, Tom, who does not seem to be worried by the bullies...

The story isn't just about school, or about bullying, however. There's an underlying thread about family breakdowns, with a sad but not unexpected revelation towards the end of the book. It's about family loyalty, too; Rose, Indigo's small sister, takes up the cudgels on his behalf and Tom is easily accepted and adopted into the extended Casson family chaos.

It's about maturity, too; about learning to deal with fears and worries, and about facing up to the worst that life can bring. There's nice irony in the book, and some light humour, and a great deal of warmth.

I didn't think it was quite as wonderfully refreshing as 'Saffy's Angel', the first book in the series, but still an engrossing and enjoyable book. It stands alone, so although more things make sense when read as a sequel, it's not necessary to have read that first.

Recommended to anyone of about eight or nine and older, including adults who want a light and relaxing read.

Katie says

Five stars might be a bit much, but I'm just enjoying these books SO MUCH. I was originally saving this for Saturday, but I ended up starting it last night (Friday) because I needed something wonderful after finishing the okay-ish Honor's Knight.

Having read my friends's reviews, yes, I can see how Rose takes over. (I still like her a fair amount. I really liked her friendship with Tom. More so than Tom and Indigo's friendship, really.)

The parents, Bill especially, are not so great. (view spoiler)

But much fun over all. I love how the Cassons just fold everyone into their family.

Mr says

The book Indigo Star is one of my most favorite books ever. It is about a boy names Indigo who has just recovered from a sickness and is coming back to school for the first time in a while. He is trying to deal with bullies, while also trying to get Sarah and Saffy (his sister and her friend) to butt out of his school life. He also meets and befriends a boy named Tom. His sister Rose also befriends him too. Tom loves to play guitar and hang out with his two friends. I really liked this book because its about the difficulties and pleasures of life. Sadly, towards the end Tom has to move back with one of his divorced parents. The Casson's family's parents are split up to. The father is in London. The mother lives with the kids but spends most of her time painting in her shed. Both the mother and father are artists. There is also a sequel to the book, which I will be

reading soon. I highly recommend this great book to anyone.

Leah Yared
-272 pages

Mireille Duval says

I liked this one better than Saffy's Angel, though I reallyyy wasn't sure in the beginning. (Bullying stories are the worst! It's hard enough that bullying exists, do I have to read about it.) But the found family is so great in this book. Sarah's always around, and Michael, and Derek, and plenty of Caddy's boyfriends, and *Tom*. I liked Tom a lot and I liked his friendship (reluctant at first!) with Rose. It made me enjoy Rose much more than in the previous book, and I am contemplating the next one - named for said Rose! - with much less dread than I was after the first book.

The parenting is still horrendous - though Rose's letters to her father are funny, it's hard to separate it from the fact that Bill just doesn't see his children ever, and neither parent mention that they're not together anymore and dating other people (what the f, seriously). But the kids being a little more grown-up compensates, luckily.

I wish we could have kept Tom forever.

LH Johnson says

This is the second in the Casson Family series by Hilary McKay. It reads well as a standalone (an understatement, it reads perfectly and joyously and richly, like the best slice of cake at the best possible time on the best possible day) but treat yourself and read the others. It has been too long since I read these books and I have reserved them all at the library to wallow in on a rainy day. Or a sunny day. Any day, really, for these books are worth cancelling worlds for.

Indigo's Star focuses on Indigo and his return to school after a long bout of illness. He is not keen to go back but go back he must and face the bullies who are there and seem centred on him. That is, until a new boy arrives to join Indigo's class and Tom, as the blurb on the back says, "will make all the difference." Alongside this plot, we have Rose being vividly gorgeous and writing letters to make her dad come home: "Darling Daddy. This is Rose. The shed needs new wires now it has blown up. Caddy is bringing home rock bottom boyfriends to see if they will do for Mummy. Instead of you. Love Rose."

I love what Hilary McKay does. Sometimes I think through reading so much and simply *having* so much to choose from, we can miss the great perfect things that are here for us and just aching to be read. Reading McKay is like therapy. This book is full of a tumultuous joy. She captures family quite perfectly; the layering of relationships, the mixture of love and hate and awkwardness and pain and secrets that *is* family and she does it quite perfectly.

This book (and, to be fair, all of her books) are joyful, joyful things. Indigo's Star shifts from hilarity through to intense vivid pain and right back again and oh God, how you miss it when it's done.

Genevieve says

This is the second book about the Casson family (after Saffy's Angel). I have a particular fondness for stories about siblings who have their own subculture and societal structure(e.g. Half Magic, Little Women, The Penderwicks, Terrible Horrible Edie). This one is especially good. It manages to address so many themes that are dear to me(the difficulties and delights of being eccentric, the tyranny of schoolyard bullies, the importance of being kind to the underdog, family love and loyalty)in a way that is heartfelt, serious, and funny. Also, I love the protagonist, Indigo. He is a 12-year-old boy who gives us an alternative to the selfishness, preoccupation with conformity and status, and intellectual sluggishness that we so often associate with the adolescent male (think of the comic strip Zits, for example).
