



# Greener Grass

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"CLA Children's Book of the Year Award shortlist, 2009

Manitoba Young Readers' Choice Awards shortlist, 2010

Canadian Children's Book Centre Our Choice, 2009AStarred Choice"

Kit Byrne's family is a strong one, but their strength and unity are being severely tested, as life becomes more and more desperate in 19th century rural Ireland. Lord Fraser is the wealthy landowner, from which the Byrne's and many other families rent their lands. When the potato blight hits, the farmers can no longer make their payments much less produce food for themselves, and the cruel system has no mercy as Lord Fraser wields an iron fist, driving families from their homes and burning their cottages.

Kit's dreams are now dashed as her family experiences a series of tragedies, and as she undergoes a daunting event that tears her away from her family. With her father dead, she must fight for survival and help her ailing mother and siblings escape Ireland for good.

This story is a glimpse into the tragic events of the Great Hunger, the famine that devastated Ireland, forcing thousands of impoverished families to seek better livelihoods outside of their homeland.

## Greener Grass Details

Date : Published March 13th 2009 by Red Deer Press (first published October 1st 2008)

ISBN : 9780889954021

Author : Caroline Pignat

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Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction, Young Adult, Cultural, Ireland

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# From Reader Review Greener Grass for online ebook

## Talltrees says

Greener Grass - Caroline Pignat - (Historical Fiction)

It's 1847 in Ireland, and in the midst of the Great Potato Famine, Kit Byrne and her family try to survive as their situation gets worse and worse. Kit struggles with her moral dilemma. Are her crimes forgiven if it's done to feed her family? Follow Kit on her adventure as she experiences poverty, clings desperately to hope, and perseveres, to try to keep her family alive.

Caroline Pignat does a great job at giving us the impressions of hopelessness and utter depression, while reading this novel you actually felt like you were part of the challenge Kit was facing. Though the beginning of the novel is a little slow moving, and could use more action, there was a lot of suspense leading up to the climax. This was a very exciting story with lots of action! The way that Pignat includes the romance and trust between Kit and Tom really helps Tom's betrayal seem more heart-wrenching. The bonds that the families form when depending on each other really help make the characters more believable, as helping your neighbours is something common in our society. The resolution was very touching, but considering that this is only the first book in a trilogy, in our opinion, the ending should have left us wanting more. We think this book did a great job of displaying a historical event very clearly, and in a way everyone can understand. We recommend this novel to readers ages 9 and up because the atmosphere of the book may be too serious for younger readers to understand. Enjoy following Kit on an adventure that will touch your heart!

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## Oksana \*Bookaholic\* says

This book was far from perfect. In my opinion, the author was trying to succeed in getting a whale to drive a car. Which means - it did not work. It started out like a good historical - good characters, strong plot.... And then it got really lame. The author tried to spin in the "magical old woman with all the potions" into the story - which also didn't succeed. I was just like, "huh? Where did that come from? Whaaaaat?", which is not a pleasant feeling.

I like it when stories make sense. It doesn't matter if they're strange or awkward as long as they have a strong steady pulse. This one veered all over the place:

Once upon a time there was a nice little girl. She loved her Da and Mam very much. One day, her Da went to work and returned dead. So she got mad at Lynch, her Da's employer. As the hate entered her now hateful heart, she decided to attempt murder. Unfortunately, she got found out and then had to escape on a boat with this boy that had a crush on her. The end. Oh wait! And before she attempted murder, she got thrown into jail for picking food off the ground of their Lord.

See? The plot, though it may be over the top a bit, is actually really good! I found myself reading it and thinking, Gosh this sounds good! And then I remember - wait! I did read this book, and it WASN'T that good! The plot and characters were mostly in shape - it's just the things Pignat tried to weave in were out of place.

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### **Sarah says**

I'll read anything about Ireland, but this just wasn't that great. Several leaps of faith (and plot) that didn't fit with the rest of the storyline. Decent enough historical fiction that shows young readers what the potato famine was like, and the desperation that went along with it.

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### **Deborah says**

I appreciate the historical connections in this novel. I think I need to read the sequel though to see how things really turn out for the young protagonist in the story.

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### **Grace says**

Historical fiction, when done right, can transport you deeper into a world than any fiction book could do. *Greener Grass* is a historical fiction done right (well, up t'ill the end). The writing flows with beautiful ease, and it transports you deep into the soul of a famished Ireland. The characters were built with grit and genuineness, the world built with a sheer rawness that made the book seem like anything but fiction. The only downfall of *Greener Grass* was the ending, because I felt like there was way too much luck involved, and events seem to have aligned with each other perfectly, yet oddly.

All in all, a really eye-opening read. I have now researched much more on famines, and must I say, such a cruel spell on humanity.

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### **Lovetoread0919 pie says**

This book was great. I usually don't read historical books, but this one was meaningful. It changed my perspective on how to eat my food and how I should be grateful for what I have. This book shows what the Irish went through during the Great Famine. It makes you feel what the characters are feeling. This was a great read and I recommend it to other readers.

P.S. It leaves you wanting more, but in that great book kind of way.

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### **Carolyn says**

I have read a variety of non-fiction books on the Irish potato famine, but this poignant fiction story personalizes the story in a way that non-fiction never can. Many of the facts of the famine are placed throughout the story so that the reader learns the history in a much more memorable way. My only rider is that it isn't for every child as there are challenging issues such as attempted murder and loss of faith in extreme circumstances.

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## Debbie says

This is the story of 14 year old Kit Byrne and her Irish family strongly committed to their faith, to their home and to each other. Events are told chronologically in a very straight forward style. I would classify it as historical fiction and although I found it compelling and a fast read the subject matter, the Irish potato famine of 1847, is very bleak. A well told period piece examining classes, Christian charity, hard work, death and survival but at what cost?

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## Elyse says

I think that this was a good book. Over all the righting was done well. However there were some parts that I thought could have been better. I had to read this for a program that I was in but over all it was an injoyable read. I have actually recomened this book to some of my friends. I thought that it was a great insight of how things might actually have been with a bit more adventure added in. If you are intrested in a bit of history and adventure this is an easy read i wqould recomened it even though it isn't my favorite.

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## Emily says

Greener grass was a great book, At first it was slow and I wasn't to interested in the book, but once I had past Chapter 4 it was hard to put the book down and I ended up finishing it in two- three days. the story was about a fictional character set in Ireland of 1847 where they had the potato Famine. Before I read this book I knew nothing except that it was a famine that killed a lot of people. Now that I've read the story of kit Byrne a 14 year old who's family struggles to go through this famine and make it out of life, who takes serious chances and gets her self in trouble to keep her family living, is just so over whelming and heart wrenching, that you will cheer on Kit till the very end. now that I've read the book based on this hard period, I have a sense of what the famine was actually like, from how many people it took to how many people lost there homes and had to live out on the street or go to the work house which was possibly the worse thing you could do.this potato famine took the lives of over million people, within that time people had hard times holding on to jobs and making money then they would starve and lose there homes,he thing that got to me first was the one charcter's family is sent to the work house and the one family member lives in hiding but works to get money for the ticket out of Ireland but ends up finding out that the family died in the work house,the thing that got me was that he didn't even know his family was dead and was still working for the tickets then ends up not having any family left.Through out the whole book you want to keep reading see what crazy thing kit would do next or your questioning if there all going to make it. I would defiantly recommend this book to anyone who loves history and likes the suspense and agony of real events with fictional characters. Even though the author did a great job on giving information of the famine through out the book he wouldn't have been able to really make the readers understand how devastating that time in Ireland must have been like. I rated this book four stars because I would read this book again and again and still find it a great read, even though I didn't like some of the deaths that happened and how sad this book actually was I loved the book for many reasons, for one they showed it in the point of view of a 14 year old child, even though I am 4 years older then the character I still felt the attachment the character gave to me while I read this book, I found my self thinking that I would do that the same way as her or questioning why she didn't do it that way. Plus I liked the book because it gives the idea of how Ireland was at this time, making me think did any of my family's

ancestors go through this tragedy. Overall this was a great book!!!

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### **Jennifer Powell says**

in this book there is a lot of suspense. I would recommend it to people who like books about stuff that happened in the past. I liked how the book it has the main characters that your always hearing about and it has some that come and go. the author did a good job at explaining the scenery so you can picture it in your head. the main character is Kathleen and her family. its really hard times so her "pa" has to leave every summer to get work. but this summer was extra bad. Everyone's crops had died. Kathleen's mom is pregnant and her baby comes two months early because she has "fever" that has been going around and they're not sure if she's going to make it.

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### **Canadian Children's Book Centre says**

“’Twas as though the hills themselves were crying that day, that morning when all of Ireland awoke to the smell of hope rotting in their fields.” So says Kathleen Mary Margaret Byrne who tells her sorrowful tale of Ireland’s Great Hunger. But tragic though it may be, Kit’s story is also a proud reminder of the hardiness, the courage and the unbreakable spirit of her people. As this story begins, Kit and her family see her father off on his annual pilgrimage to seek work in England. But this year they wait in vain for him to send home his wages. Work has grown harder to find this year, but soon that worry pales in comparison to the trials to come. First the potato blight destroys their crops and with them, the hopes and dreams of the villagers who depended upon them. On the verge of starvation and with no money to pay the rent, the luckless farmers and their families find themselves cruelly evicted from their homes by heartless landlords who burn their meager homes to the ground.

Conditions only worsen as they all fight hunger, cold, sickness and despair. For Kit, it takes the harsh words of Old Lizzie Plunkett to remind her of who she is and who she needs to be in these dark times to hold her fragile family together, and to find a way to “sow hope in a barren field and share the fruit of it with everyone.” This is a deeply moving and vividly rendered tale that is beautifully told in language that all but lifts modern day readers into the heart of old Ireland itself. Caroline Pignat has done a magnificent job of recreating this deplorable time, of making the plight of Kit and the people of Ireland tangible and real to young readers from another time and place. Although it is a woeful tale, it ably depicts the generosity of spirit, the tenacity and will to survive, and the hope that Kit and her countrymen clung to with fierce determination –making it as much an ode to these people and all that they endured as it is a remarkable work of historical fiction.

Reviewed by Lisa Doucet in *Canadian Children's Book News*  
Fall 2008 VOL.31 NO.4

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### **Autumn says**

Greener Grass....ah, the back of the book really caught my attention. It actually made me want to read the books! Being from Ireland I was instantly hooked as well. However, the beginning of the book was quite slow and boring and kind of confusing. I felt the first few chapters of the book were just a place to introduce the

characters and set the scene. (Of course that's what usually starts a book) BUT there wasn't really anything in those first couple of chapters that hooked me in. Which I think is very important at the beginning of a novel.

As the story progressed I started to like it more and more, the characters began to develop more (naturally) along with the plot, so the storyline was a bit more clearer now.

All the twists and turns in the last couple of chapters made me jaw drop, literally. Dad's death?!?! Tom burning down Kit's house?!?! Kit getting caught trying to kill Lynch?!?! I hated the ending though - and obviously Tom and Kit's relationship had gone down the tubes. To tell you the truth, I knew they wouldn't last.

Back on the ending of the book, I found it such a cliff hanger and a horrible way to end the story. I had my fingers cross that everything would end up fine and Kit would board the ship to Canada. But nooooooooooooo, nothing can ever end the way I want it to!

All in all, whatever the novel was lacking in the beginning made up for it in the end. I can't wait to read the sequel! (Wild Geese)

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### **Jodi says**

Gobbled this book up in a handful of delicious gulps of reading. Such a sad but beautifully written book about the potato famine in the 1800s in Ireland. It made me so sad to read about how people tried to survive during this horrible point in Irish history. I can only hope that Kit and her family reach Canada and find a better life for themselves!

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### **Nancy says**

Set in Ireland in 1847 during the Great Famine, you can just feel the hunger as portrayed by Kit, a young Irish girl. She tells the story of her family's struggle to survive when the potato crops fail. Families are split apart as fathers go abroad to look for work. People are put out of their homes because they cannot pay the rent. Imagine eating boiled seaweed for days on end. Gives one food for thought - no pun intended.

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