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Ida B: and her plans to maximize fun, avoid disaster, and (possibly) save the world

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Hannigan, Katherine. *Ida B: and her plans to maximize fun, avoid disaster, and*. Greenwillow, 2004. ISBN 0060730242. \$15.99. 256 pp.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Family life--Wisconsin--Juvenile Fiction; Schools--Juvenile Fiction; Nature--Juvenile Fiction;

Fourth grader and only child, Ida B Applewood enjoys living on the family farm, being homeschooled, and embracing nature--even chatting with the trees and brook. This happy life is disrupted when her mother is diagnosed with breast cancer. Ida B must go to public school, and part of the apple orchard must be sold. A bad kindergarten experience makes Ida B resistant to school and to kind Mrs. W, the teacher. When Mrs. W asks her to help Ronnie with his math, Ida reluctantly accepts and a friendship begins to develop, but when classmate Claire's parents buy part of the family farm, Ida B wages a one-person campaign to drive the family away.

A clever book jacket with brilliant red font and a glossy apple hanging from a branch hints at Ida B's personality, environmental interests, and surname. Ida B's universal and kid-friendly theme, "There is never enough time for fun," announces that this novel is a sassy romp through the perks and perils of childhood. The conversational first-person storytelling, filled with run-on sentences, sensory descriptions and metaphors, hyperboles, alliteration, sentence fragments, and grammatical flubs, perfectly captures Ida B's character – irrepressible, non-conforming, imaginative, sensitive, observant, and self-possessed. Parents, teachers, classmates and even the trees, mountain, and brook are as Ida B judges them. Mother's cancer, the selling of part of the farm, and Ida's relationships with Mrs. W., Ronnie, and Claire are minor subplots but provide the impetus for conflict and change. Ida B loves her life and doesn't want change. She moves through the grief process for her family, the trees, and herself - sadness, anger, resentment, destructive behavior, and a gradual change of heart, but change takes time, and Hannigan gives Ida B time to change. Ida B will capture the imaginations of young readers who sometimes experience similar bewilderment and conflict as change sweeps into their lives.