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My Mother the Cheerleader

Holly Dickman

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Sharenow, Robert. *My Mother the Cheerleader*. HarperCollins, 2007. ISBN 9780061148965.
\$16.99. 304 p.

Reviewer: Holly Dickman

Reading Level: Young Adult, All

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction; Historical Fiction;

Subject: School Integration—Juvenile fiction; Race relations—Juvenile fiction; Mothers and daughters—Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

The 1960s in New Orleans is a conflicting time full of racism and prejudice, and 13-year-old Louise Collins is right in the middle of the conflict because her mother is a "cheerleader". The "Cheerleaders" are a group of women who openly protest integration in front of a formally all-white school and berate Ruby Bridges, a six-year-old black student. Louise never really reflects on the action of her mother and her mothers' friends until a stranger from New York comes to stay at the boarding house Louise's mother runs. Immediately Louise and her mother are both charmed by the new guest, Morgan Miller, his polite manner as well as his intelligence. It is not long until Morgan's mysterious past in New Orleans, his open-minded and contemporary political views begin to draw the wrong kind of attention from the locals. When danger approaches, Morgan Miller is forced to leave Louise and her mother behind, but the impact he has made on their lives will remain forever.

Author Sharenow has captured a new perspective regarding the tumultuous 1960's through his character Louise. Louise becomes a real and lovable character as she expresses her innermost thoughts and feelings to the reader. *Cheerleader* leaves the reader with something to think about concerning the real meaning of courage. Useful for middle and high school libraries, and for classroom units regarding United States history or racism. The story addresses many mature themes, and adults may want to read the story before referring young students or children to read it.