Dear Hank Williams

Nancy Haight
**Review**

It’s 1948. Tate P. Ellerbee, age eleven, lives in a small town in Louisiana with her great-aunt, great-uncle, and younger brother, nicknamed Frog. Every Saturday night, Tate’s family listens to Hank Williams, a rising star on the radio program Louisiana Hayride, and Tate just knows she and he are kindred spirits. So, when Tate’s teacher begins the school year by asking the students to write to a pen pal, Tate knows just who to choose. Tate introduces herself, her family, and members of the town to Hank through the letters she writes. She is determined to sing like her mother, a former night club singer, and practices daily with Frog listening. When she announces that she’s going to compete in the local May talent show, her family is stunned: they obviously believe she can’t sing. After having her practice with them as her audience, they realize her voice has developed beautifully. She competes and wins.

Holt has given Tate a strong, confident voice in *Dear Hank Williams*. The story is told completely through Tate’s letters to Hank Williams, and each letter leaves the reader eagerly turning the page to see what happens next in Tate’s life. Deftly told, realistic and compelling, the reader sees Tate’s challenges as she grows during the nine month school year that the letters detail. Tate is a great character who the reader will care about and her letters will leave the reader as surprised as Tate herself when she realizes the losses in her life and reveals her secrets. Writing Hank Williams allows Tate to work through the loss of those she loves. Well-written and compelling, this book is for tweens and older.

*This book deals with a parent absent because of a jail sentence and death of a major character.*