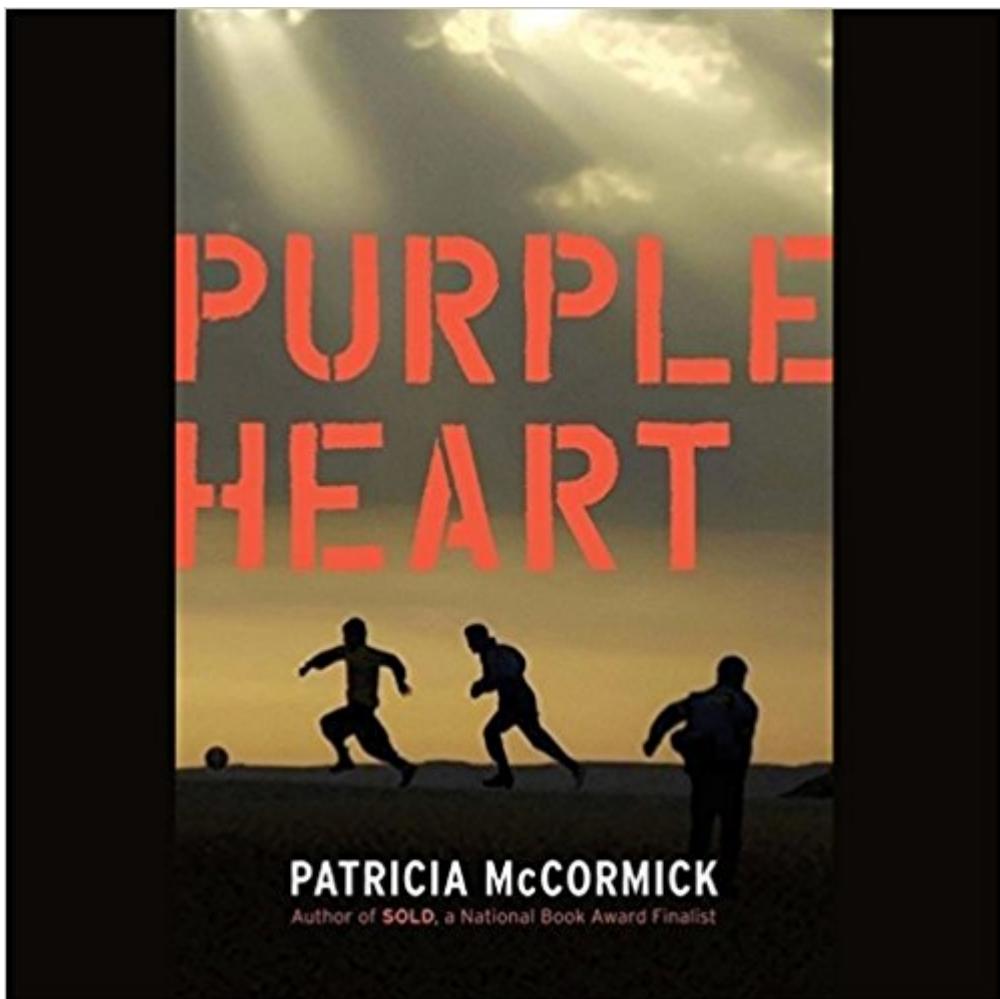


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Purple Heart



Synopsis

[Young Adult Fiction (Ages 12-17)][Read by Adam Verner] From National Book Award finalist Patricia McCormick comes a visceral and compelling portrait of life in a war zone where loyalty is valued above all and death is terrifyingly commonplace. When Private Matt Duffy wakes up in an army hospital in Iraq, he's honored with a Purple Heart. But he doesn't feel like a hero. There's a memory that haunts him: an image of a young Iraqi boy as a bullet hits his chest. Matt can't shake the feeling that he was somehow involved in his death. But because of a head injury he sustained just moments after the boy was shot, Matt can't quite put all the pieces together. Eventually Matt is sent back into combat with his squad - Justin, Wolf, and Charlene - the soldiers who have become his family during his time in Iraq. He just wants to go back to being the soldier he once was, but he sees potential threats everywhere and lives in fear of not being able to pull the trigger when the time comes. In combat there is no black and white, and Matt soon discovers that the notion of who is truly guilty is very complicated indeed.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 8 and up

Customer Reviews

"Gripping details of existence in a war zone bring this to life." --ALA Booklist "Many of the soldiers in Iraq were not yet teenagers when this war began. What they and the children of Iraq are experiencing is not a political issue-it's a human issue. PURPLE HEART is a visceral and affecting portrait of their world." --Bob Woodruff, ABC News "McCormick builds the plot subtly and carefully

with rich, spare prose." --Kirkus Reviews "In this suspenseful psychological thriller McCormick raises moral questions without judgment and will have readers examining not only this conflict but the nature of heroism and war." --Publishers Weekly (starred review)

Sometimes a book begins with a single, unforgettable image. A few years ago, I had the privilege of working on an unusual peace demonstration -- one that united Vietnam vets with recent veterans from the war in Iraq and old-fashioned peaceniks. These unlikely groups were brought together by the American Friends Service Committee, the Quakers. As a group, we arranged more than 3,600 pairs of combat boots, each one tagged with the name of a soldier who'd died in Iraq or Afghanistan, in a display that was meant to symbolize the real human cost of the war. Nearby, we laid out a pile of civilian shoes to symbolize the uncounted men, women and children who'd died in Iraq. One pair of shoes caught my eye. It was a pair of sneakers, just the right size for a ten-year-old boy. I instantly saw that boy being shot in the chest, his small body flung into the air from the force of the blast. As much as I tried to forget such a horrific image, I couldn't. And so I spent the next few years imagining how such a thing could happen. Purple Heart is a fictionalized look at that death, and how two young American soldiers may or may not have been involved in it. It isn't an anti-war book. It isn't a pro-war book. It's an attempt to portray how three children -- two eighteen-year-old Americans and a ten-year-old Iraqi boy -- have been affected by war. It's estimated that more than 650,000 civilians have died in Iraq. Because this war has been fought in cities, in and amongst families, civilian fatalities have become the "signature" of this conflict -- causing profound moral conflicts for soldiers and profound losses for those families. I finished this book with as many questions as I had when I started. I came away with a deepened respect for our soldiers, a better appreciation of life in a war zone, and a strengthened commitment to peace. My hope is that readers will, too. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

On the cover of the copy of Patricia McCormick's novel "Purple Heart" that I read is a close-up photo of a boy's face. Only the eyebrows, dark eyes, and nose show clearly, framed by short dark hair and small sections of his ears. The rest of the photo, in graphic design terms, bleeds off the printed cover. "Never," we are told, "judge a book by its cover," but never have I seen a cover that so aptly sums up the contents. Of course, you need to read the book before you can understand and judge how apt the cover is - but then, in truth, you need to read "Purple Heart" period. Listed as a "young adult" book, it is one of the most adult books about the young men and women we adults

send to fight our wars that I have ever read. As a citizen, Ms. McCormick has been an avowed critic of the war in Iraq, but as an artist she explores the war and the youngsters who fight it with a cool eye and a superb ear. Her characters sound like soldiers in the 21st century, worried about each other, worried about the families they left behind, worried about the people they must live and serve among, too. "Purple Heart" concerns itself with a small moment in the war - it's not about a great battle, nor an act of supreme bravery, nor a question of global politics. No, Ms. McCormick focuses on one squad of soldiers as they depend on their courage, their morality, and their need to make nearly instantaneous decisions in action. To one young soldier, Private Matt Duffy, both his sanity and his humanity are at stake as he strives to remember the moment before he was wounded. He faces Kafka-like military bureaucracy and Camus-like self-doubt as his body heals. I will not spoil the story - it's a good story - but I will present my belief that Ms. McCormick has done far more than write a good story. She has created a great novel that deserves to be in the pantheon of "The Red Badge of Courage," "All Quiet on the Western Front," "Catch-22," and "They Things They Carried."

This book could hardly be called a novel... it is too short to describe it as anything more than a novella, or a short story. Having said that it is well worth the read. Perhaps that is another reason it could hardly be called a novel. Well researched, it brings the characters and the scenarios to life in such a way as to make it seem a non-fiction biography....one questions is it really a work of fiction? It explores the psychological nightmare faced by modern soldiers, whose enemies are not just people wearing a different uniform, but include people not discernable from joe citizen, and children, and (vitally) their own ghosts. Engaging and absorbing it paints a story little different from those told from that war of 40 years ago, and a story which still continues in another war today. Purple heart.

I purchased these for a teacher in my school district as requested. She has been very happy with them so far.

I would give this book a solid 4 or 4 1/2 stars. I really enjoyed reading it. I would like for this book to have more of a conflict, but it ends great. I would recommend this book to teenagers. Just because of the explicit language. Overall...it was a great book!

Recommended to me from a teacher friend I read this and was motivated to finish it in one sitting. As I lost a friend in Afghanistan 5 years ago, this book was a true page turner. Real, true...would be great for at-risk high school students...especially boys.

Really interesting and I really enjoyed it. I couldn't stop reading it. I really recommend it to other kids. It is a mature book and a lot of action.

It was a realistic view of a soldier in a situation he doubts himself and humanity.

I'm disappointed with this young adult novel; the plot is simply too predictable. This book, however, is valuable in another way. It clearly illustrates how warriors with a brain injury are often sent back to the field of battle prematurely. Like a good soldier, our protagonist Matt is anxious to return to his outfit. He under-reports the severity of some of his symptoms. Patricia McCormick makes it clear that Matt is still suffering from considerable impairment when he is judged fit for duty. His fellow soldiers quickly recognize that Matt is not quite "right." In this condition, Matt is a liability to himself and his comrades. It's good to know that the Department of Defense is studying the possibility of bio-markers that will indicate the presence and severity of a brain injury, thereby preventing warriors like Matt from prematurely reentering the battle.

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