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Rosabelle by Linda Harrington

Publisher: Harrington Books

RRP \$16.60
E-book \$5.47

Written for the confident young reader, this is so much more than a story of a girl's bond with a horse. There is deceit and intrigue, schoolgirl cattiness, and bonds of loyalty within family and between friends.

Linda Harrington has set the tale near Woodville, where she grew up in the horse racing community in the 1970s. The story, set in those times, is told through Jane's eyes, the younger of two daughters for Elizabeth and Jim Williams. This typically hard-working Kiwi family are struggling to make ends meet. They rent an old house with a leaking roof, afraid that any request for repairs would lead to an increase in their rent.

School days, family times with grandparents, and the social expectations of those times are all explored sympathetically. Jane's warnings of bad things to come fall on deaf ears, and there is a great deal of anguish on Jane's part, and ever more struggle on the part of her family.

While this book was first published in the USA, the only concession to the American reader is the map of New Zealand near the front of the book and the rather extensive Glossary of Words and Phrases which explains words to do with horses and farming, New Zealand and foreign terms, plus New Zealand Phrases (including historical). Reading through those was a delight. We have our own vocabulary and Linda is to be commended for using this.

At times this seemed a little contrived or overdone, with a lot of detail used to set the scene, but as the story progressed the author's sense of time, place, and the Kiwi vernacular won out.

Author's website:

www.harringtonbooks.wix.com/rosabelle

Reviewed by Bookrapt member Chris Wright

