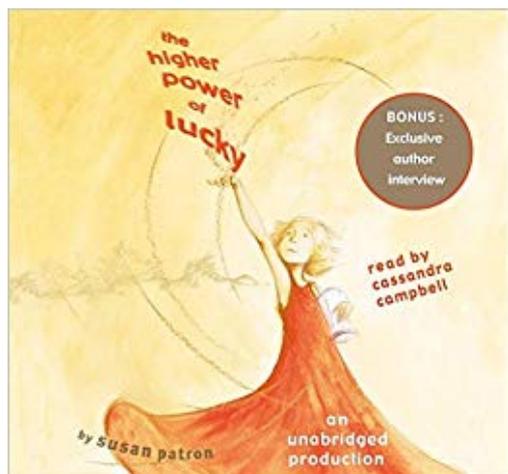


## Higher Power of Lucky(lib)(CD) by Cassandra Campbell,Susan Patron



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FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES ONLY. Fearing that her legal guardian plans to abandon her to return to France, ten-year-old aspiring scientist Lucky Trimble determines to run away.



## Reviews of the Higher Power of Lucky(lib)(CD) by Cassandra Campbell,Susan Patron

- **Rayli**

This is a short and sweet story. No more and no less. I enjoyed it and will be reading it to my eight-year-old boy and nine-year-old girl. The use of the word scrotum does not play into that decision. My children have been taught proper terminology for all body parts, including genitalia, since birth. They have grown up using words like scrotum, vagina, anus, and urethra. I suppose that it unusual though I am not certain that it is highly unusual anymore. My being a physician and comfortable with those terms myself makes me more appreciative of books that do not exclude them. What is disappointing is the huge fuss and controversy a word like scrotum still triggers in adults. Not in the least because it distracts from the overall theme of the story, which is not scrotum-centered. I don't

begrudge the book the Newberry-I finished it with great enjoyment and satisfaction and only learned about the Newberry debate when I mentioned this to an author friend of mine, who responded with, "Oh, they say that only won the Newberry because she used the word 'scrotum'".....what? This was the first I had heard of any controversy and I am glad I bought and read the book before knowing about any of that. I recommend this story for both adults and children. There is a lot to love here, scrotum notwithstanding.

- **ARE**

I've read and reviewed, (and enjoyed), a lot of fantasy and adventure and action and school daze books, but sometimes you want a calm, mellow, well crafted book that's just about life and family and community and growing up. Here, we have an engaging and thoughtful narrator with a realistic feel, a good heart and an inquiring mind, and while the drama in her life may not be monumental in any large sense it is important to her and so it is important to us.

Lucky is concerned about stability and getting control of her life. She's sort of an orphan, lives in the middle of nowhere, and is worried that her beloved guardian might leave her to return home to France. Lucky is surrounded by other lost souls of both the kid and adult variety. She is scrappy and decent and alternates between being a bit dreamy and being overly practical. Her voice is fresh and innocent, but not simple.

In her way, and not in an unnerving way, she concentrates and gives voice to the kinds of insecurities that sometimes plague the youngsters for whom this book is intended. The graceful way Lucky assures her place seems likely to interest and comfort those readers.

So, this book is a nice, well crafted and thoughtful change of pace, and a gently upbeat meditation on the issues of home and place that matter most.

- **Faegal**

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Review of all three books in the 'Hard Pan Trilogy'

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Lucky lives in Hard Pan, California, in a canned-ham bedroom attached to a trailer. She lives with Brigitte, who is not her mother but her biological father's French ex-wife. Brigitte came to Hard Pan all the way from France because Lucky's father asked her to, after Lucky's mother went out into the desert after a storm and was struck dead by lightning.

So for now Lucky lives with Brigitte, who calls her 'petite puce' which sounds lovely in French, but really means 'little flea' in English. Lucky loves Brigitte, but does not dare hope that she will want to be Lucky's mother for good.

So in between trying not to hope that Brigitte will become Lucky's mother, and avoiding looking at her real dead mother's ashes in an urn, Lucky decides to find her higher power to get her through. It's what everyone talks about at the Alcoholics Anonymous meeting held at Hard Pan's Found Object Wind Chime Museum. Higher power. Short Sammy talks about it a lot, when he recounts the story of the day his beloved dog got bit by a snake and his wife left him, and how he ended up finding his higher power that got him through the worst time in his life.

'The Higher Power of Lucky' was Susan Patron's 2007 Newberry award-winning middle-grade book.

In 2010 Patron went on to continue Lucky's story with 'Lucky Breaks', and ending with 'Lucky For Good' in 2011, when Lucky is twelve-years-old, rounding the books out to the 'Hard Pan Trilogy'.

Susan Patron's series is a complete delight; for both its charismatically flawed heroine and her delightfully quirky hometown of Hard Pan. The first book, 'Higher Power of Lucky' begins when Lucky is ten-years-old, and her mother has just recently passed away, 'replacing' her with her father's ex-wife, the French Brigitte. We are introduced to this very unconventional family unit, which encompasses the wider town of Hard Pan, populated with quirky characters. There's Lucky's best friend, Lincoln, a knot-tying protégé with hopes of becoming the future President of the United States. Little boy Miles who has a perfectly-timed cookie-retrieval system for visiting all the Hard Pan residents. There's also Short Sammy who lives in a water tank, and mourns the loss of his best dog friend not to mention an archeological team who breeze through Hard Pan to stop at Brigitte's renowned French-bistro café.

The books are all about Lucky; a glorious ragamuffin of a girl who is navigating the changing landscape of her life after losing her mother. The books begin when she is ten and follow her to age twelve, but Patron's brilliance lies in not restricting Lucky to her young age - she has moments, particularly in 'Lucky Breaks' and especially 'Lucky For Good' when she's starting to notice the opposite sex, beginning to appreciate (and resent) the flaws in her character and truly come to realize the impacting world beyond Hard Pan. 'Lucky For Good' is a particularly interesting book for Lucky's evolution, because she starts to think on the feelings of resentment and anger she has towards her absent father - who abandoned Lucky and her mother shortly after she was conceived. Patron doesn't inundate the books with all of these life-changing, big marker moments - and it's partly thanks to the third-person narration that as readers we can see Lucky's forming character, but don't get bogged down in the life-changing momentousness of it all. Patron is such a masterful storyteller, particularly in her middle-grade revelations, that she gives the readers just enough incite to have that spark of recognition regarding big changes within Lucky. And some of Patron's emotive descriptions and similes are just so pitch-perfect and brilliant;

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Lucky had the same jolting feeling as when you're in a big hurry to pee and you pull down your pants fast and back up to the toilet without looking - but some man or boy before you has forgotten to put the seat down. So your bottom, which is expecting the usual nicely shaped plastic toilet seat, instead lands shocked on the thin rim of the toilet bowl, which is quite a lot colder and lower. Your bottom gets a panic of bad surprise. That was the same thump-on-the-heart shock Lucky got finding out that Miles's mother was in jail.

-- 'The Higher Power of Lucky'

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These books are very much focused on family, but not the conventional, nuclear one of other middle-grade books. Patron, in her 'Lucky' series really embraces the notion that it takes a village to raise a child, and lacking blood-ties doesn't mean lacking in love. Lucky's interactions with her stepmother, Brigitte, are heartfelt and lovely.

I really enjoyed reading Susan Patron's Newberry-winning series, focused on Hard Pan native, little girl Lucky and the cast of quirky characters in her desert hometown.

- **Arashitilar**

"The Higher Power of Lucky" is a heartwarming and hilarious story for middle graders, and a title that is deserving of its prestigious Newbery Medal. Children and adults alike will enjoy the trials of

young Lucky, and Susan Patron does a magnificent job of making a setting that should be bland (a quiet desert town) into something that is interesting and brimming with possibility. Though quite deep in theme (a child's quest to cope with abandonment), the novel has a humorous, lighthearted vibe that persists throughout. Patron has a great knack for language... just take a gander at a couple of my favorite passages:

"Never before had Lucky realized that Lincoln's knot-tying brain secretions gave him such a special way of seeing."

"The feel of the air, soft and nearly still, was something you usually wouldn't even notice. But now, after the dust storm, it felt like a kindness, a special thoughtful anonymous gift."

"After a while, the full moon roared up into the sky behind their hill. Lucky thought that the people on Earth were very, very lucky to have their exact moon."

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