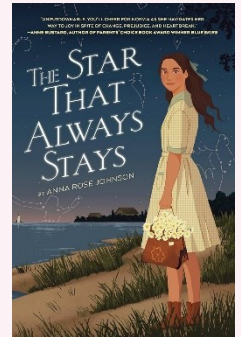




TEEN'S BOOK CLUB GUIDE

THE STAR THAT ALWAYS STAYS

By Anna Rose Johnson



“It occurred to Norvia that the qualities that made up a heroine were inside them – *not* things that other people had control over... all these heroines were memorable because of their *spirit* and *heart* and *inward* beauty.”

GENRE

Fiction

Modern Classic

Coming-of-Age

THEMES

Identity

Hope

Friendship

Home and Belonging

Contentment

Faith

Broken and Blended Families

Stories

Beauty

Womanhood

CHARACTERS

Norvia Anne Nelson (Nan)

Norvia is a fourteen-year-old girl of French-Indian heritage. Having grown up in an environment where education for women was not valued or encouraged, Norvia fears her dreams of becoming a bookkeeper will remain out of her reach. On the outside, Norvia is softly spoken, often shy, polite, and in control of her emotions. On the inside, however, she is a brilliant heroine, forging a path toward greatness, dreaming vivid dreams, embracing beauty, popular among her classmates, and falling in love with the perfect beau. Norvia soon discovers what makes a great heroine, and to her surprise, it's not what others think of her, but what's in her heart and spirit that matters most.

Angèlique Ward (formerly Angèlique Nelson)

Angèlique is Norvia's mother. She is a lovely and tender-hearted woman who prioritises her faith in God and children above all else. After the devastating breakdown of her marriage with Anders, Angèlique falls sweetly in love with Virgil Ward and uproots the children to live with Virgil and his family. While her new marriage is a blissfully happy one, the church community respond unkindly towards her and her new status as a married divorcée, and she struggles to fit in and belong amidst these circumstances which were uncommon during the early 1900s.

Herman, Elton and Casper Nelson

Herman is the oldest Nelson child. He moves away to work in Michigan and returns home to visit as a happily married man. Elton is the middle brother and Norvia's biggest champion. He is fiercely loyal to her, and as far as brothers go, is the most sincere and caring a girl could desire. Casper is Norvia's younger brother. He is quick to speak and is the most reluctant to accept his new family dynamics. However, after Uncle Virgil helps Norvia attend school and gets him a position at his blacksmith shop, Casper decides, "he's swell".

Dicta Nelson

Dicta is Norvia's younger sister. At only 8 years old she commands the room and aspires to fame, fortune, and all things lovely in her sweet and innocent imagination. Dicta is an open book and has none of Norvia's shyness or softly spoken ways; she is a firecracker and a humorous delight (or often embarrassment) to those around her with her boisterous, truth-telling, and quirky caring ways.

Uncle Virgil (Virgil Ward)

Virgil Ward is Norvia's new stepfather. Despite Norvia's anxiety that he will be cruel, uncaring, or dismissive of her and her siblings, he proves himself to be an accepting, kind, and compassionate father towards the Nelson children. Virgil is well respected within his community and financially supports Norvia to attend high school.

Marguerite and Vernon Ward

Marguerite and Vernon are Virgil's children and Norvia's step-siblings. They are total opposites; Marguerite embodies sunshine and kindness, while Vernon tends toward grumpy and difficult.

Kittie

Kittie is a bubbly, kind, and outgoing young girl from Norvia's school. Initially, Norvia avoids Kittie, finding her personality awkward and loud, however, over time, Norvia realises Kittie is a kindred spirit and a wonderful and loyal friend.

Aylmer

Aylmer is a classmate of Norvia's who has taken a romantic interest in her. Despite asking her to the dance, he stands her up and initially, Norvia believes it's because of her parent's divorce. She soon discovers that Aylmer was abandoned by his father, and his mother is no longer caring for him, so he lives quite poorly with a local family who have taken him in, and he only stood her up because of an inability to find something appropriate to wear.

Louis Behern

Louis is Norvia's love interest. He attends her school, however he is much older than her, and this concerns Uncle Virgil. Louis, like Norvia, is studying bookkeeping and has a job locally in the industry. Louis has a German heritage, and because of the war, can relate to Norvia's experience of trying to hide his identity to fit in with the community.

Grand-père

Grand-père is Norvia's kind-hearted story-loving grandfather. He is the generational link between Norvia and her Ojibwe heritage, and never tires of sharing tales about their ancestor Migizi and the Reindeer Clan. Grand-père is as solid and steadfast as a rock, providing immense comfort amidst life's hardship.

Old Mary and Young Mary

The Marys are Norvia's beloved grandmother and great-grandmothers. Their heritage is French-Indian and they live with the family cooking, cleaning, and sewing. They are both no-nonsense type women, skilled in many homemaking crafts and cooking, and often provide wise counsel to the family.

STORYLINE

Norvia is a fourteen-year-old girl determined to have the best year of her life, but there's one problem, her whole world has fallen apart, and everything she's ever known changes before her eyes. Being uprooted from her beloved

Beaver Island, this would-be heroine discovers that no matter how much daydreaming is done, returning to the good old days is simply an impossibility. Once the proud boaster of her Ojibwe heritage, she is now forced to hide her identity, and what's worse, her wonderful Grand-père, story-teller extraordinaire, can no longer comfort her with his stories.

How is a girl of fourteen to become the heroine of her own story, when she no longer knows who she is?

Through laughter and tears, Norvia discovers what makes a true heroine great. She learns lessons in valuing the past – but looking towards the future. She learns to feel compassionate towards others and to embrace her unexpected and new life.

“This tender coming-of-age story about an introspective and brilliant Native American heroine thoughtfully addresses assimilation, racism, and divorce, as well as everygirl problems like first crushes, making friends, and the joys and pains of a blended family.”

1 QUESTION ONE

What did you enjoy most about Norvia's story?

2 QUESTION TWO

What is the significance of the title of the book? Describe some of the people, places, or things, which might symbolise a 'North Star' to Norvia.

3

QUESTION THREE

Norvia's heritage is a source of great joy for her. How does Grand- père's storytelling comfort Norvia? Discuss the Reindeer Clan motto, "We bring people together", and how this transforms Norvia's interactions with others.

4

QUESTION FOUR

Womenhood is an important theme throughout the story. Discuss the differences between Anders' attitudes towards women, education, and heritage, and Uncle Virgil's. How were they different How did divorce affect women in the early 20th century compared to today?

"It was a beautiful feeling to know that God had good plans for her. Perhaps if Marie Bottineau Baldwin could be a lawyer, Norvia Nelson could indeed be a bookkeeper."

5 QUESTION FIVE

Norvia, her brothers, and Vernon are decidedly against their parent's marriage, while Dicta and Marguerite are much more positive. What were some of your favourite bonding moments between the step-siblings?

6 QUESTION SIX

All her life Norvia has dreamt of being popular and fitting in. How does she respond when Helen and the popular girls reject her? What did you think about Norvia's initial rejection of Kittie? How does Norvia come to realise that Kittie is a worthy friend?

7 QUESTION SEVEN

Norvia struggles with contentment because she is too often stuck in the past and remembering the "good old days." How did she find the balance of learning from the past, but looking towards her future with hope?

8 QUESTION EIGHT

How did the scriptures Vernon and Uncle Virgil shared with Norvia encourage her faith and help her to choose joy? Do you have a scripture that is kept in your heart and encourages you during challenging times?

*"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an unexpected end."
- Jeremiah 29:11*

9 QUESTION NINE

Norvia is motivated by her 'To Do in High School' List;

1. Be popular
2. Find a Beau
3. Be charming and exciting.

Does she accomplish this list? What does Norvia learn about what makes a heroine great?

"She would be a true heroine. She would be an adventuress. She would be brave, and cultivate grace and fellowship and a life of stories. But most of all, she would choose joy, regardless of what happened to her."

