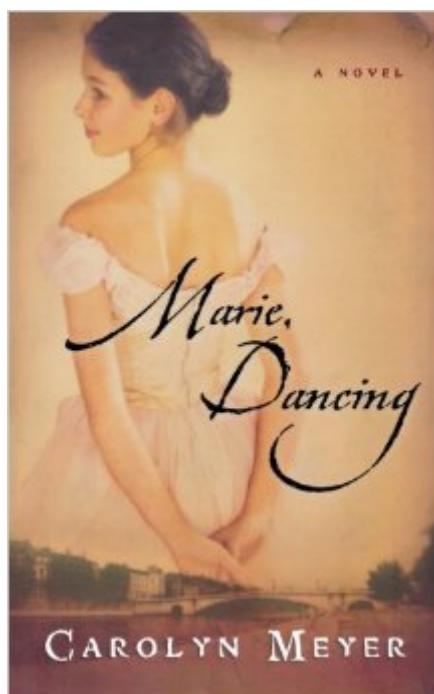


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Marie, Dancing



Synopsis

Marie van Goethem, a fourteen-year-old ballet dancer in the Paris Opéra, has led a life of hardship and poverty. For her, dancing is the only joy to counter the pain inflicted by hunger, her mother's drinking, and her selfish older sister. When famed artist Edgar Degas demands Marie's presence in his studio, it appears that her life will be transformed: He will pay her to pose for a new sculpture, and he promises to make her a star. But will being Degas's model really bring Marie all she hopes for? Includes a reader's guide and an author's note.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

Customer Reviews

I've been enjoying Carolyn Meyer's Young Royals series. I have book three of the aforementioned series lined up for a read, but decided to give Marie, Dancing a whirl this time. This wonderful novel is based on the Victorian work of art of Degas's controversial sculpture called The Little Dancer. This tells the story of a penniless French family and the daughters whose only hope and happiness in life is that they are students at the Paris Opera Ballet. For Marie van Goethem, being part of the Paris Opera Ballet is the best thing in her life. At home, she has an alcoholic mother and shattered dreams due to their impoverished conditions to look forward to. Her dreams of success will come with many obstacles, including endless suitors and a proposition to pose for a sculpture in order to put food on the table, but Marie will be content if at least one of her sisters, Antoinette and Charlotte, realizes her dream of becoming a dancer. There are some twists in the novel. This is a moving and

compelling story of a young woman who will do anything to help her family and get them through their difficult times. Marie is such a fighter for someone so young. The descriptions of their conditions and the struggles with an alcoholic mother are quite vivid here. Marie's outcome is a realistic one that makes the reader wonder if a person of limited means could rise above the social and financial obstacles and succeed in life or if you're destined for a life of misery or mediocrity at best. It also makes the reader wonder if, despite the aforementioned obstacles, you can succeed in changing your life if you put your mind and determination to it.

The year is 1878. Fourteen-year-old Marie van Goethem has dreamed of nothing but becoming a *sujet* in the Paris Opera since she first joined the company years ago. And now, at the age of 14-years-old, Marie feels that she has the potential to do just that. However, just as she is basking in the glow of feeling light on her feet, she is picked out of her class by none other than prized Parisian painter, Edward Degas. Degas is a regular fixture in Marie's dance classes. Always sketching the dancers in various positions, from *pointe* to simply lacing their slippers, or adjusting their tutus. But Degas has other plans for Marie. For, as soon as she accompanies him to his studio, she learns that Degas plans on using Marie as the model for his one, and only, sculpture, entitled *Petite danseuse de quatorze ans* (Little Dancer Aged Fourteen). Marie is only too happy to comply with Monsieur Degas's wishes, for her family has struck poverty since her father passed away, and she could use the money to provide food for her younger sister, Charlotte. Money that her mother drinks away, and her older sister, Antoinette, spends on frivolous items, such as fancy stockings. However, as the years pass, and Marie is no longer summoned by Monsieur Degas, she realizes that she needs to find another way to make some extra money, in an attempt to follow her deceased father's wishes, and provide for her beloved family. And, at both her mother's, and Antoinette's request (and demands), Marie begins following the same path Antoinette has paved for her, attending the *foyer de la danse*.

I can't count the times that I've seen a truly inspiring painting or sculpture and wondered what the inspiration behind it was. With *MARIE, DANCING*, the story behind Edgar Degas's well known sculpture, *Little Dancer Aged Fourteen*, is brought to vivid life in this fictionalized account. At fourteen, Marie van Goethem still holds out hope that one day her life will be, if not grand, then better than it is now. Her drunken mother is unable to hold down a job, and the place where they're forced to live can only be described as squalor. Marie knows their family--made up of Mother, Tante Helene, older sister Antoinette, and younger sister Charlotte--are poor and destitute. The only thing

that brings joy to Marie's life is dancing in the Paris Opera. Ballet is her life, along with the life of both of her sisters, enrolled under the tutelage of Madame Theodore at the ballet school. Things soon change, though, for Marie and her entire family. Antoinette is being wooed by much older, and much wealthier men, and although she promises to send them money when she's set up as a mistress by her benefactor, she never does. But when Marie meets Edgar Degas and he asks her to pose for him, Marie prays that her life is about to change forever. And change it does, but not in the ways she had suspected. Mother is still drinking, Charlotte is the only girl of the three who shows real promise as a dancer who can make it her career, and her love interest, Jean-Pierre, has asked her to wait for him while he makes a name and a home for the two of them.

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