

Ages 10-12

Children's Book Reviews

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**Review: Emily Climbs (Revised)**

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## **\*\*Emily Climbs**

By L. M. Montgomery

Bantam/Harper & Row Publishers Inc., 1983 (orig. 1925)

### DESCRIPTION:

In this second volume of the Emily of New Moon trilogy, Emily Byrd Starr is finding direction on her path to success as a writer and she is growing up along the way. At “almost fourteen” when the book opens, the teenage orphan is rapidly approaching a life-changing crossroads in her journey. Still compelled to write, Emily’s life is framed largely by school, church, and social events with her faithful friends. However, when her closest chums find their own ways to attend high school at Shrewsbury, Emily is haunted by the specter of lonely fall and winter evenings without them. At the last minute, the Murray pride prods Aunt Elizabeth and the other relatives to shoulder the financial weight of the young lady’s academic training and they send Emily off to the realms of higher education. Boarding with somber, sarcastic Aunt Ruth is not without its moments of humor and chagrin, pride and humility, with the niece learning to use “the Murray look” to occasionally vanquish her indomitable aunt. Throughout her struggle to get just one piece published, Emily still spends magical evenings with the enigmatic Dean Priest, offers her writing for the caustic critique of Mr. Carpenter, and nightly fills her Jimmy-books with the triumphs and failures of her stormy days. Readers will cheer when that first acceptance letter arrives from a publisher, and sigh at future rejections, all the while knowing that Emily must become successful, because writing is her very breath. Resolution of most problems is satisfactory in the end, and Montgomery concludes with a tantalizing hook. Readers will want close at hand the final book in the trilogy, *Emily’s Quest* to begin when the final page is turned.

### CRITIQUE:

Although differing in temperament from her literary “cousin” *Anne of Green Gables*, Emily Byrd Starr steals the hearts of readers just as surely. Her love—near worship—of nature, her passion for writing, and her tenacity under the strongest opposition are winsome traits. Readers may wonder at her naivety in the relationship with Dean Priest, but that relationship finds resolution in *Emily’s Quest*. Negatively, there is a scene in which Emily and Teddy seem to be experiencing some sort of ESP. However, in reality there is much documentation of strong friendships providing warnings when one pal is in danger and needs the other. Also, there is a time when Emily seems drawn by something that could be evil spirits in the wood. Again, there is the reasonable explanation that her character has always been portrayed as being extremely sensitive to nature and, as a writer, she is keenly aware of both good and evil. For readers who want to know more about the author, it is said that Emily’s life parallels Montgomery’s more than any of her other novels.

### RELATED SUBJECTS:

Canada, Creativity, Orphans, Prince Edward Island, Writing

CHARACTER THEMES:

Creativity, Friendship, Independence, Inspiration, Hope, Perseverance