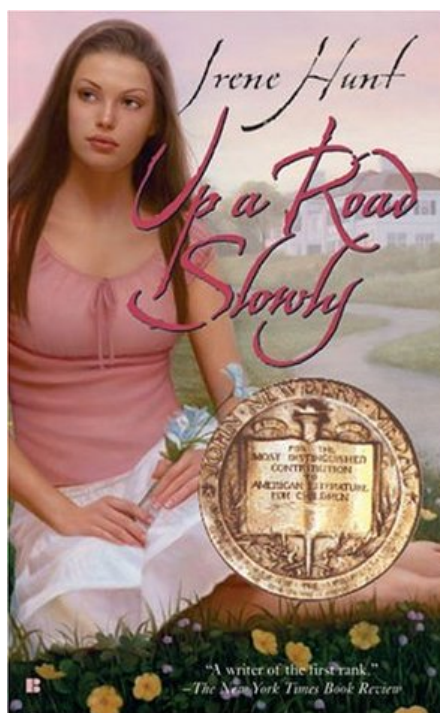




Up a Road Slowly

Irene Hunt

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Up a Road Slowly Irene Hunt

The Newbery Award-winning novel

From the author of *Across Five Aprils* and *No Promises in the Wind* comes her most beloved story of a girl's coming of age.

After her mother's death, Julie goes to live with Aunt Cordelia, a spinster schoolteacher, where she experiences many emotions and changes as she grows from seven to eighteen.

Up a Road Slowly Details

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Author : Irene Hunt

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Genre : Young Adult, Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction

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From Reader Review Up a Road Slowly for online ebook

Jocelyn says

(Spoilers ahead!) This Newbery Medal book came out in 1967 -- but I never read it until now. When seven-year-old Julie loses her mother, she also loses her home and her sense of security. She goes to live with her mother's sister at the family homestead. Aunt Cordelia has never married, but her brother (a narcissistic, essentially harmless alcoholic) lives in a separate house on the property. Aunt Cordelia teaches in a one-room schoolhouse, where as a young woman she coached her beau into higher education. But all that aside, this is essentially a coming-of-age novel about Julie, who has to negotiate her identity. Is she more like Aunt Cordelia or Uncle Haskell? And what roles do her father and older sister now play in her life? When Julie is in high school, she falls in love with a cad who eventually dumps her. She then takes up with a chum from the old days at Aunt Cordelia's school -- the boy she has really loved all along. Julie wants to be a writer and makes several attempts at dramatic short stories. She must learn to write what she knows. She is finally published when someone else submits one of her stories without her knowledge. The End.

So, this turns out to be one of many coming-of-age stories, written by female authors, about a girl who wants to be a writer. (See *Little Women*, *Harriet the Spy*, etc.) Somehow it reminds me of one such story in particular . . . but the difference between Anne Shirley and Julie Trelling is their motivation. Anne just wants scope for the imagination, some kindred spirits, and a bosom friend. Julie, whose orphan story is a bit more serious-minded than Anne's, wants to be the apple of someone's eye. Anne must learn not to make so many mistakes; Julie must learn to love and be loved.

Audrey says

2017 Re-Read: I guess it's true that we never read the same book twice. This time around, I thought this was just okay. Maybe it's because I am further from Julie's age that I find this harder to get into. Reading it this time actually just made me feel kind of sad and hollow.

2013 Review: I loved this. It takes a bit to get into, but once I did I didn't want it to end. The writing has a certain panache. Perhaps it's just the narrator's spirited reading (which also took me a bit to warm up to, but I ended up really liking). In any case, I want to read more by this author! I can relate to the character of Julie in so many ways. Parts of this felt so real that it made me wonder if it was based on a true story.

(view spoiler)

Shelley says

I love this book. I have loved it since I first read it back in third grade, and continued to love it this week. What I don't quite understand is WHY I love it. A lot of reviews here liken it to Anne of Green Gables, but outside of the very basic plot (girl goes to live with stern older woman), it's not at all similar, in plot or style. It's incredibly old-fashioned, in thoughts and terms and story. The language and how it flows is very 1960s, and reminds me a bit of Madeleine L'Engle's precocious teen characters. In any other authors, the prose would set my teeth on edge for being almost too cloying and self-aware. But damn, I don't care; I love this book, I love Julie and Danny and Aunt Cordelia and even Uncle Haskell. Go figure.

Marita says

I had to read this for school but recently read it again. Loved it even more this time. A gentle book about growing up, with many life lessons along the way.

DaNae says

Up a Road Slowly is a love story. Not a boy meets girl kind of story, but a girl meets maiden aunt kind of story. Julie is seven when her mother dies and she and her older brother are whisked off to live in the country with Aunt Cordelia, a spinster school teacher with a ram rod posture and a ram rod distinction between correct and not. Julie and Cordelia are instantly at odds. They rub against each other for the next ten years where they find that they have rubbed off on each other to the betterment and delight of both.

I spent the first three quarters of this book in giddy-sycophantic love. Hunt's writing is lovely and precise. Her character development three dimensional to the point of yearning to look for real estate next to the Bishop homestead. Uncle Haskell is the unrepentant alcoholic black sheep of the family. He is painted with an affecting clarity and humor. When he writes Julia a note after the death of a school mate, its honesty and grace broke my heart into a million pieces.

It took awhile for me to realize that even if I had read this book as a child there is no way I could have appreciated it as I was at present. I believe that a child and an adult will walk away with completely different experiences. I'm afraid to say that there may not be much to keep today's young readers enthralled. For all of its beauty, it is a quiet story.

The one element that drove me to distraction was that I could not determine what time period the book was set. It won the Newbery in 1967 but seemed much to sedate for the time period. I couldn't tell if I was reading a period piece or if Hunt was consciously being coy with the year.

I might hand it off to one of my students, and then hold my breath that she would appreciate a fraction of what I found to love.

Katie Tatton says

Without a doubt, beyond compare, my favorite book ever. Up a Road Slowly is the book sent to me by my closest aunt the fall after my father died. It came with a note telling me how much she treasured the book and hoped that it would find a place in my heart too. Whether it was because the book came from such an influence in my life or because I was still emotionally raw when I read it, (or maybe because it's a Newberry Award winning novel,) Up a Road Slowly struck a chord within me that has never ceased to play on my heart. I try to read it once a year or so, and nearly twenty years later, it still speaks to me.

Up a Road Slowly is the coming-of-age story of Julie Trelling, a girl of seven who's sent to live with a spinster aunt in the country after her mother's death. The story follows her elementary school experiences of friendships forged and lost, classmates who are both mercilessly teased and teasers, and the painfully real outcasting of a mentally handicapped girl. The story of Julie's first love and its loss is poignant and completely relatable. (Who among us hasn't out of loneliness fancied a rather shoddy love into something beautiful?) My favorite passages in the book are the one in which Julie learns life's lessons. Irene Hunt, the author, has a way of injecting the truths I wish someone had told me in a way that is neither preachy or unbelievable.

Carol says

After I posted a story of a telephone interchange I had as a girl shortly after my mom's sudden death, a friend remarked that my story reminded her of this book.

Last night I needed some escapist literature. I always say, Better an excellent children's book than some shoddy pulp fiction. I was in the perfect melancholy mood to appreciate Irene Hunt's novel in a minor key. I read it in one sitting and my responses have been brewing ever since.

Will it be a five star book for you? I don't know. The beginning and middle were superb, the ending a bit predictable and on the edge of facile. I was relieved it wasn't too tidy.

I had read Across Five Aprils twenty years ago. But Irene Hunt is surely on my radar; I will definitely read more.

Thomas Bell says

Slowly is right, though suddenly at times. The book is about a girl who, at 7 years old, is transferred to her aunt's house because her dad is single and thus (in the author's opinion) unable to care for her properly. The girl grows up and discovers who she is and what different kinds of relationships mean to her. The sentences flow smoothly and are well written - give the author an A for completing a marvelous writing assignment. However, the story moves very slowly but jumps from one setting to another almost invisibly, so it

sometimes takes a while to catch up to what the new situation is.

And then she describes some things too much. For example, she could have said that "even the windshield wipers, with their fruitless swishing back and forth, echoed the feeling in the car that rainy day." However, she spends almost an entire page on those stupid wipers and the symbolism behind them the 12-year-old was thinking about. Then she brings them up again when she didn't feel so somber anymore. Urgh.

I was also a little frustrated with the 'better' way her step-mom taught. She wanted the kids to think for themselves, but the example the author gave of that was a writing assignment for the kids to write what Thoreau would think of Federal funding of Public Education, right after reading his book 'Civil Disobedience.' In this is the hidden assumption that this Federal funding is bad, and this belief is being pushed on the kids. This is something I very much dislike about the way some teachers teach, and the author praised this sneak in this book as a way to help kids to think for themselves. Yuck.

Also, while trying to show why people should treat mentally disabled kids better, the author then goes on to proclaim, after the kid (whom the author calls 'retarded') dies, that it was better for them so that they don't have to live such an awful life and better for future society as well since we won't have her mixed up in the gene pool. Yes, and all while trying to say how we should treat those people better.

And lastly, the book implies that it is every girl's biggest dream to grow up and get married, and since the guy was so nice as to marry her everything she does from thence onward should be in servitude of her husband, who really doesn't need to do any more. I mean, he married her, right? What more can be expected? She owes him for that.

Coral Rose says

I first read this book in high school, when I found it while shelving books at the public library (I have that job to thank for so many favorite reads!) and I'm sure I read it 5 times between then and graduating from college. I just reread this book for the first time since college this past week, and was not disappointed.

This book is sweet, sincere and touching. Julie's innocent, earnest journey from confused seven-year-old to confident seventeen-year-old. In short, manageable chunks we observe her struggles with her very similar and strong-willed guardian, her struggles to feel loved, her first boyfriend and subsequent understanding of the difference between love and enabling. What I like about it the most, though, is the reliance on family, functional or dysfunctional.

Julie's family supports Aunt Cordelia through her first meeting in years with the boy who broke her heart. Cordelia gently asks about Julie's father's feelings when considering where Julie should stay through high school. The joy when Julie recovers from the scar of first love lost. Julie's consideration of her niece's feelings.

Maybe because my family is so important and vital to me, I understand how you can love the very things about your family that drive you crazy, and how precious it is to have a family when the road we walk is sad or confusing. They don't always do the right thing, but sometimes the littlest gesture is the one we remember for years.

I cried this read-through, in that very early chapter where Julie is crying inconsolably in the closet and Cordelia crawls in and holds her and cries with her. When I came home for Thanksgiving right after Cori died, I got into my parents water bed and went to sleep. When I woke up, my sisters were there, one on each

side, and we just talked quietly, remembering when Cori visited and just being together. I love this book because it reminds me of moments like that, when being a family is what's holding you together, imperfections and all.

Wow. Um. I don't know if this is a coherent review at all, but I feel like I should mention one more thing. One of the main negatives mentioned in other reviews about this book is Aunt Cordelia's statement that a woman becomes a woman when she loves a man. Perhaps, being a bit on the old-fashioned side, I don't find fault with this because I agree with her, but I think this statement is more than just an strong support of marriage. This statement is made in a context of not just love, but of self-sacrificing love. Not love that annihilates an entity, but a gracious love like that of Cordelia for Jonathan, a love that encompasses his frail, dying wife and supports him long after her hope of being his wife herself has died. I don't think Cordelia is suggesting that a single woman is incomplete, so much as that a person who has never truly loved someone more than themselves is incomplete. And you know, loving someone else unconditionally is a challenge that everyone should try to live up to, single or married, young or old.

And that is what I have to say about that. Katie, I hope this isn't too verbose for you. Talk about being a chatterbox.

Karen says

This book was first published in 1966, and it shows. Like, you can definitely tell from the get go that not only does the story take place a while ago, but it's definitely written in that young-adult style of the past. Do you know what I mean? To me, the stories and characters in most YAs from 20+ years ago feel more removed—like, the emotions feel more sugarcoated and distant or something. Anyway, while there's nothing wrong with that style, it did take me a while to get into the book because of it. Everything just felt like I was seeing it through the haze of the years rather than living it with Julie.

And really, that could've been entirely deliberate on the author's part, since the story is written as Julie looking back on her childhood and teenage years, which she spent living with her older, unmarried aunt. To me this story felt a bit like the "Anne of Green Gables" series. Nothing too crazy happens—rather it's a year-by-year account of her growing up and the normal adolescent things, good and bad, that she goes through as she matures.

The story generally felt quaint and sweet, and I thought it would stay that way throughout. And it does, but towards the end, you get a few glimpses of Aunt Cordelia and Uncle Haskell that give them surprising but much needed depth. And I think that depth catches Julie herself off-guard a bit, as she's used to seeing them through the eyes of her childhood rather than the eyes of a near-adult. And that depth towards the end made it all more satisfying than I think I would have found it otherwise.

Overall, a book that's short and charming, if a little slow. If I had a 10- or 11-year-old daughter, I think this is the kind of book I'd want to read out loud with her.

Rating: 3 / 5

Originally posted at Book Light Graveyard

NebraskaIcebergs says

If you are looking for a plot-driven book, *Up A Road Slowly* by Irene Hunt is not the book for you. This quiet novel is about Julie's growth, her changing relationship with her relations, and her adolescent romances. This is a lot of story to pack into a book of less than two hundred pages! For this reason, I once thought the book tedious but now love most everything about it. I'm glad that it survived the cull of my books when I moved out on my own as an adult.

The first chapter doesn't sell me on the book. The transitions between scenes aren't always clear, leaving me sometimes confused about what has transpired. The adult tone also feels awkward, uneasily moving between a child's perspective and an adult's memories. Moreover, I spend too much time wondering about Julie's age, where her family lives, and even where the story of her life happens. The latter may not really be the fault of Irene Hunt. The life she described may be accurate to 1966, the year the book was published. If it's autobiographical, it could depict the decades the years in which Irene Hunt grew up. My confusion rather may suggest that parts of the book have dated.

Normally too, I dislike "coming-of-age" novels. They often amount to little more than summaries of a character's life at certain ages. My husband who read *Up A Road Slowly* as part of our family's book discussion too even commented on how the book started out like a summary. Relying on memory of earlier reads, I said I had kept the book because the main character wanted to become a writer. This revelation doesn't actually occur until the end. One can see the signs throughout however: Julia loves words, to read, memorize, and write poetry, to read hefty adult classics, and to dabble in writing stories.

Up A Road Slowly ultimately succeeds largely for the same reason that *Anne of Green Gables* does. The authors of both "coming-of-age" books pick only pivotal scenes to detail. Therein, we learn to love the main characters and enjoy reading about their journey to maturity. Interestingly, there are other similarities between the books: In *Up A Road Slowly*, Julie moves in with Aunt Cordelia and Uncle Haskell--a sister and brother who live together but have never married. In *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne moves in with Marilla and Matthew--another sister and brother set who have never married. Marilla is old-fashioned and stifling to Anne; so is Aunt Cordelia. Both adult women had a beau whose departure they regret. Although Julie's Uncle Haskell is nowhere near the saint that Anne's Matthew is, both men offer lifelong advice and encouragement.

Ultimately, *Up a Road Slowly* is about much more than Julia's literary aspirations, which is why now I love most everything about it. This read around, my favorites were those that resonated with my own experiences. For example, Julia grew up with a close bond to her sister Laura but struggled with losing that position when Laura married. Similarly, my younger sister and I struggled to remain close after I moved nearer to my boyfriend. Julia grew up with her aunt and struggled as an adult about how long to continue living at home. Similarly, because my dad widowed early in my early life, I grew up with a tight connection and didn't really feel free to leave until he remarried.

My dad picked this book largely because he felt my sister and I would relate to Julia's writing experiences. What does *Up A Road Slowly* offer to those with different interests? Most every chapter chronicles an event that helped Julia mature. The scenes are heartfelt, such as the ones about a classmate whom Julia despised because she talked, acted, and smelled funny. They are also replete with ideas about how the choices we make effect the people we become. *Up A Road Slowly* is an absorbing and beautiful book.

Kaia says

[in this case, a problematic depiction of a girl with a cognitive disability from a bad home, who is very poorly treated and ends up dying in order for the main character to have a moment for growth. There's also a small scene where a young forces a kiss on the main character, who punches the

Malissa Bishop says

Reading this is like visiting a fond memory from my past. I first read this book when I was 10, again at 14, and now at 30 have read it a third time. I have enjoyed it each and every time and since reading it and as an adult now appreciate it more. For me it was very easy to get lost in the writing and the story. A timeless coming of age story with the love of family and a little romance thrown in.

Elena says

This book is a love story but also about a young girl that comes to grow up in the story. It takes place in the mid 1900s. She goes through tragic events, such as her mother dying, school problems, dating, and family issues. I definitely recommend this book if someone is looking for a book that would touch them and make them think about what they are doing in their lives. It really touched me and I've acted different with people ever since.

Benji Martin says

Originally reviewed at Newbery Pie, <https://newberypie.wordpress.com/2015...>

Two weeks ago, if you would have stopped me in the street and said, "Quick! Name an Irene Hunt novel!" I would have automatically responded with, "Across Five Aprils!" I'm not even sure I knew Up a Road Slowly existed until I saw that it was next on the Newbery list. First I want to say that I was very impressed with the writing in this novel. It's only 186 pages in paperback, but there is a total, but subtle character transformation in Julia the protagonist. I remember finishing the book and thinking, how did she change that much, that subtly in so few pages? The answer is simply that it's really good writing.

Julia isn't a very nice girl when we first meet her, but as someone very wise once told me. Show me a bitter person, and I'll show you a hurt person. Life has dealt Julia a hard blow. Her mother has died of the same sickness that left her bedridden for a while, and her dad, in the beginning is totally closed off from her. She is sent away to live with her aunt who, gradually throughout the book, with the help of Julia's own experience, teaches her how to be a kind, loving human being.

One of the fun things about reading through the Newbery winners is going back and looking at the reviews of friends who have read them before. Sometimes I've disagreed with what a few of them said, but never as much as with this book. Two of my friends totally smashed the book because of Julia's childhood meanness, and one of them even called Julia an "evil person." Anyone who knows me knows that I like my characters flawed. I like to see them change and learn from their mistakes, but that's not always necessary. What is necessary is having real characters. They can't all be kind and wonderful all the time. That's not believable.

Who wasn't mean to someone as a child. Who doesn't wish they could go back to their immature, bratty self and beat some sense into them? The beginning of the book reads kind of like a confessional to me, and instead of turning me off to the book, I appreciated it.

Later, when Julia's uncle is critiquing her writing samples, he tells her, "your villains have nothing but venom in their souls, and your sympathetic characters are ready to step right off into Paradise without one spot to tarnish their purity." I wanted to shout and give Uncle Haskell a high five and an amen. We don't need characters like that. We need real characters who go through real ordeals. It's almost like Hunt saw the issues people would have with prepubescent Julia and added this part in there to defend her book.

All in all, I thought it was really good. My only problem was with the whole Danny thing. You could see it coming from a mile away, from the beginning of the book, really.

Amy says

Very much a coming of age story, sweet but angsty. It is a nice combination of not too intense but still full of underlying drama.

Bethany says

Read for 5420 class

I am so thankful that jFics have come a long way since Up a Road Slowly was published in 1966 because this book was just awful.

Firstly, the emotions Julie experiences are much too mature and nuanced for a seven-year-old, which doesn't lend verisimilitude to the narration, even though it is told from adult Julie's perspective. This adult point-of-view also lends a didactic tone to the overall story, which adds to the impatience and frustration I felt as I read Up a Road Slowly.

Additionally, the emotions are told to the reader, not shown, which makes for drab content and uninvested readers. However, the theme of the story that induced metaphorical vomiting was that a girl needs a man to be complete- that she can't even be complete in her platonic, non-romantic emotions without experiencing true love. Just. No. No woman should ever have to feel like they are incomplete without having experienced love. A man does not make a woman "complete".

Lastly, there is absolutely no historical context. The entire story is told in a small-town bubble. Now, I know that living in a rural community and/or small village often feels like being disconnected from the world at large, but readers never receive a glimpse of happenings outside of the town to clue them into the year or even decade. There are cars, but Julie and Danny both are familiar with riding horses and trot together regularly. Girls mostly seem to wear dresses, especially in public, but pants aren't completely forbidden or taboo. Uncle Haskell is an alcoholic who buries his empty bottles down by the creek, which hints that it's during Prohibition in the 1920's, but strict and demanding Aunt Cordelia never rails against his drinking, as she most likely would if it were the Prohibition Era. There are no cultural clues, either: no movies, actors, famous people, or books mentioned outside of Jane Austen and Shakespeare, who have been around for centuries. I just want to know when this book takes place so I can better create a picture in mind as I read. Should I imagine Danny's car is an old Model T or is it a new Buick Century?

Between the overly mature emotions of the protagonist and didactic tone, the vomit-inducing true love theme, and the lack of any historical context, I would have never finished Up a Road Slowly if I hadn't had to read it for class.

Margaret says

Well unfortunately I wasn't overly impressed with this book. For one thing, it bothered me that I couldn't quite ascertain the era in which the story takes place. The characters seemed to hold values of a bygone era (the importance for a woman to keep her house clean, the idea that it's a man's world [I think Uncle Haskell said that] & the notion that the aspiration of all young girls is to get married and become a good wife) and seemed old-fashioned even within the context of the story. I wanted to know more details regarding Julie's mother - so I could understand Julie's actions and emotions, especially early in the book. And I guess I wanted a little more drama - it seemed like some of the things that Julie reacted to were often trivial (I thought she was a little oversensitive, although not due to being egotistical, as suggested by one of the characters)- and a little less predictability (of course her family didn't like Brett). Although some characters were well-developed (Aunt Cordelia for example), others were not (her brother Chris, her father) Also I wanted to see more of a plot line develop around Aunt Cordelia and Jonathan Eltwing - everyone seemed just a little stifled and repressed in this book to me. Not quite what I expected for a Newbery winner, based on the winning books I've read so far.

Miz Lizzie says

The book is written in the style of a memoir, which gives it feel (at least to me) of really being a book about childhood and growing up for adults.

I was very frustrated by the lack of placement in time or place in the text, which was not assisted at all by the cover of the paperback copy that I read which features a pretty modern looking (if on the sentimental, traditional side) teenager. For a book published in the middle of the 1960s, it seemed to me to extraordinarily nostalgic of a simpler, more innocent time. I think the latest the setting could realistically have been was the 1950s.

I did not think it was well constructed at all. There were several points at which the author talks about things apparently have been going on for years but not a single mention of them is made until suddenly it becomes part of the "plot" (such as it was). For instance, it is not until Julie is a teenager and debating over going back to live with her father (who apparently, being a man, was constitutionally unable to raise children younger than teenagers on his own after his wife's death) that we suddenly hear about all these visits Julie has had with her father over the years. Then, near the end, Julie confides as if it should be obvious to the reader by now that she has always secretly wanted to be a writer when the only writing Julie has ever been shown to have any interest in are her high school English essays (and that is only brought up, it seems because her boyfriend has been getting her to write his essays as well).

I literally cringed when the message of the book was blatantly revealed as being "a woman is not complete until she is in love." And then indeed Julie suddenly manages to become that ideal perfect never-losing her-temper-always-doing-things-for-others-perfectly-understanding-of-others' feelings woman when she and Danny finally become a couple.

Yes, I absolutely loathed this book. I read it as a teenager in the 1970s but it didn't (thankfully) make much of an impact.

Having said that, however, I do recognize that there was a period in my life (ages 10-12) when I would have absolutely relished the "good girl" message, the sentimentality, and the soft understated romance. And, in the very conservative and religious community in which I work, I know that many parents and their tweens and possibly teens would be very appreciative of the traditional message in this Young Adult novel. (And, I do feel it was probably honored in 1967 at least in part as a Young Adult novel that deliberately stuffed the realities of life back in Pandora's box and showed instead a sweet, innocent, and, oh, so sentimental view of a girl's coming of age before the 1960s.)

Møst?fy? says

DNF

I found it boring and figured the whole book is gonna be about ordinary events in an ordinary girl's life. So, no thank you.
