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## Katy by Jacqueline Wilson Book Review by Sile-Marie Carroll, aged 10



We welcome this review of the children's book 'Katy'. Jacqueline Wilson describes it as a book inspired by the classic 'What Katy Did' but updating Katy's experience of acquiring a disability and defining a new life. Children's books have an important role in changing views about disabled people in society and working with children at a formative stage of their lives.

Katy is an 'everybody' book about a girl who gets a disability and about how she lives with that disability. Adults could read it and enjoy it a lot while children can also read it and not feel it's just for grown-ups. I would recommend it as it is an interesting read.

Katy is a twelve year old girl; she is an adventurous tomboy, she loved to play adventurous games, skateboarding and climbing trees. Katy's family is made up of eight people including herself; her kind dad - a doctor, her fashionconscious stepmother, her around eight year old stepsister Elsie, her real ten year old sister Clover (who is also her second best friend) and a cute three year old step brother Phil, and finally the five year old twins – Jonnie, a girl who loves zebras and Dorry, a boy who loves to eat – a lot!

Katy had one day that changed her life a lot. After this day her best friend Cecy treated her differently (for a while), her stepmother became too nice which was annoying and her sister Clover started to play with Elsie instead because she couldn't go upstairs to play anymore. The day before this day, she was able to happily run and have adventures in the secret garden with her brothers, sisters and best friend. In the days after she spent most of her time in hospital, sitting around and eventually ended up in a wheelchair.

She acquired her disability on a day she was supposed to be skateboarding with her friends, but her stepmother banned her for doing this because she misbehaved. So she went to play, tied a rope to a tree to swing but the rope snapped and she fell. It was as a result of the accident she had to use a wheelchair.

Being in a wheelchair changed her life a lot. In school she was no longer in her best friend's class and someone had to volunteer to push her around. She could only stay downstairs at home as she couldn't take the chair

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upstairs – this made her feel sad and left out as she could no longer share a bedroom with her sister. Her hobbies and interests changed altogether- she could no longer do the things she once loved. Her best friend also treated her differently - but she didn't stay like that. However she did make a new friend – an adult, a friend of Katy's dad who was also a wheelchair user. Helen was loved by everyone; she was so kind, gracious and funny. But she had an extra special bond with Katy. I half enjoyed the story. At times I thought it got very repetitive – there were too many fights with her stepmother. Her stepmother, Izzie, was a fashionable lady that made handbags for a living and who spent a lot of time telling Katy to 'smarten up', 'to be less of a tomboy' and 'to stop skate-boarding as it was too dangerous'. Katy also fought a lot with her younger stepsister, Elsie. Elsie was not a great person to play with, she had a horrible imagination. Some of the make believe games were too action-packed for her.

However I did enjoy the fact that all in all they were a crazy family who at times were very funny and this made for good reading. My favourite part is where young Phil cuts his finger with a sharp knife and everyone goes crazy – he creates havoc!

Having read the book I think that if I had a disability it would be hard to play some of the games I love to play with my friends. In school I do believe that most people in my class would treat me differently – they'd be strange around me, or cautious or even shy. I also think my teacher would treat me differently – she'd be nicer to me. But that would not be a good thing because I wouldn't like to be treated differently. In fact, if I used a wheelchair, I could not go to my current classroom- its upstairs.

I have read other books where someone had a disability or illness. In 'Gangsta Granny' – granny gets cancer and in all 'Percy Jackson' books, while it doesn't say he has dyslexia – because he is a halfblood the words muddle up so that only half-bloods can read. To make it easier for someone in a wheelchair I think that a faster electric wheelchair would help. This would mean they would not need to be pushed; they could still play games like 'catch' and they could compete in games at the Paralympics.

In the future I would like to see improved wheelchairs; faster, easier to control and better able to deal with bumps and uneven surfaces.

If Katy was writing a blog, I think she would ask that when other children meet someone in a wheelchair they should be nice and treat them normally. While she looks different, she still feels normal.



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Aged 10 years (4th Class, Hewetson School, Clane). I love to doodle, make art, and play with my friends. I love to read – I enjoy David Walliams, Timmy Failure and some Jacqueline Wilson. Someday I'd also like to be an author.