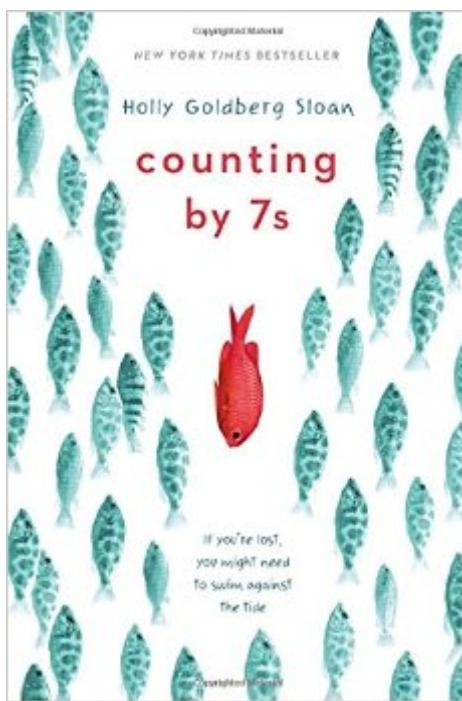


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Counting By 7s



Synopsis

A New York Times Bestseller. An Best Book of the Year 2013. A Kids' Indie Next List Top Ten Book-- #4, Best Books of Autumn 2013. B.E.A. Buzz Book Award 2013. A Texas Bluebonnet Award Nominee 2014-2015 Master List. A School Library Journal Best Book of the Year. An E.B. White Read Aloud Honor Book. A Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award Nominee. A National Public Radio Best Book of the Year. In the tradition of *Out of My Mind*, *Wonder*, and *Mockingbird*, this is an intensely moving middle grade novel about being an outsider, coping with loss, and discovering the true meaning of family. Willow Chance is a twelve-year-old genius, obsessed with nature and diagnosing medical conditions, who finds it comforting to count by 7s. It has never been easy for her to connect with anyone other than her adoptive parents, but that hasn't kept her from leading a quietly happy life . . . until now. Suddenly Willow's world is tragically changed when her parents both die in a car crash, leaving her alone in a baffling world. The triumph of this book is that it is not a tragedy. This extraordinarily odd, but extraordinarily endearing, girl manages to push through her grief. Her journey to find a fascinatingly diverse and fully believable surrogate family is a joy and a revelation to read. "In achingly beautiful prose, Holly Goldberg Sloan has written a delightful tale of transformation that's a celebration of life in all its wondrous, hilarious and confounding glory. Counting by 7s is a triumph."--Maria Semple, author of *Where'd You Go, Bernadette* "Holly Goldberg Sloan writes about belonging in a way I've never quite seen in any other book. This is a gorgeous, funny, and heartwarming novel that I'll never forget."--John Corey Whaley, author of *Where Things Come Back* "Willow Chance subtly drew me into her head and her life, so much so that I was holding my breath for her by the end. Holly Goldberg Sloan has created distinct characters who will stay with you long after you finish the book."--Sharon Creech, Newbery Award-winning author of *Walk Two Moons*

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 770L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 384 pages

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Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 5.7 x 1.3 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (526 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #32,240 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #60 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Death & Dying #84 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Orphans & Foster Homes #194 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Parents

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

Meet twelve year-old black, bespectacled, self-aware genius and gardener Willow Chase, who is obsessed with the number 7; obsessed with studying and observing medical conditions, and obsessed with plants. Not long into the story, Willow is suddenly thrown out of the Garden when her white adoptive parents die in a horrific car accident. Leading up to the accident, Willow has, herself, been following a collision course that begins with being referred by her school principal to a counselor named Dell Duke, this being the result of the principal's determination that Willow has cheated on a State standardized test. (She completed the test in 17 minutes and was the only student in the State to answer every question correctly, which might provide a clue as to why she hasn't been at all engaged with middle school, other than as a silent observer of bizarre behaviors.) Counselor Dell Duke (who categorizes the students he works with as THE STRANGE, MISFITS, ODDBALLS, and LONE WOLVES), quickly learns that he needs a whole new category for this young woman. And in the wake of Willow's second loss of parents in her short life (having already been adopted the first time), it will be counselor Dell Duke; plus one of the other students he works with named Nguyen Quang-ha; plus Quang-ha's sister Nguyen Thi Mai; plus Quang-ha and Mai's mother Pattie; plus a taxi driver named Jairo Hernandez; who will affect and be affected by this amazing girl. COUNTING BY 7s reminds me of BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE because of the way that Willow is saved from going to the pound (being thrown into The System) by unlikely heroine Pattie Nguyen (Quang-ha and Mai's mother), the Vietnamese immigrant proprietress of a nail salon.

Counting by 7's is simply a beautiful story. It speaks from the heart with a raw level of emotion that was unexpected and seldom seen in middle grade fiction. Its life affirming message is masterfully delivered with prose that is well written and thought provoking. There are absolutely no mis-steps as the author paints a picture of a young girl destroyed by grief and rebuilt by love. Willow Chance is a twelve year old genius. She is devoted to her garden, her parents, and quietly learning to manage

the intricacies of middle school when both of her parents are killed in a car accident. Her life becomes chaos, and it's only through the efforts of an unlikely group of people that she discovers a future for herself. Willow is an astounding character that I won't soon forget. She touched my heart, and made this story a delight to read from start to finish. Willow is surrounded by a group of unique people carefully crafted and nuanced. None of these characters are perfect or clichéd, and always manage to deliver surprises. They each come into Willow's life needing something, and their stories add to a narrative that becomes complex and increasingly inspirational as they are all effected by Willow's unique view of the world. I could point to many instances in the plot that were contrived, when events relied just a bit too much on coincidence to be believable, and when things work out just a bit too easy. To do so would be to deny the slight touch of magic that seems to permeate these pages. This is a story that made me smile. It made me want to read it again the minute I finished it. I was sorry it was over. I wanted to be with Willow as she mulled over the life lessons to be learned from a plant.

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