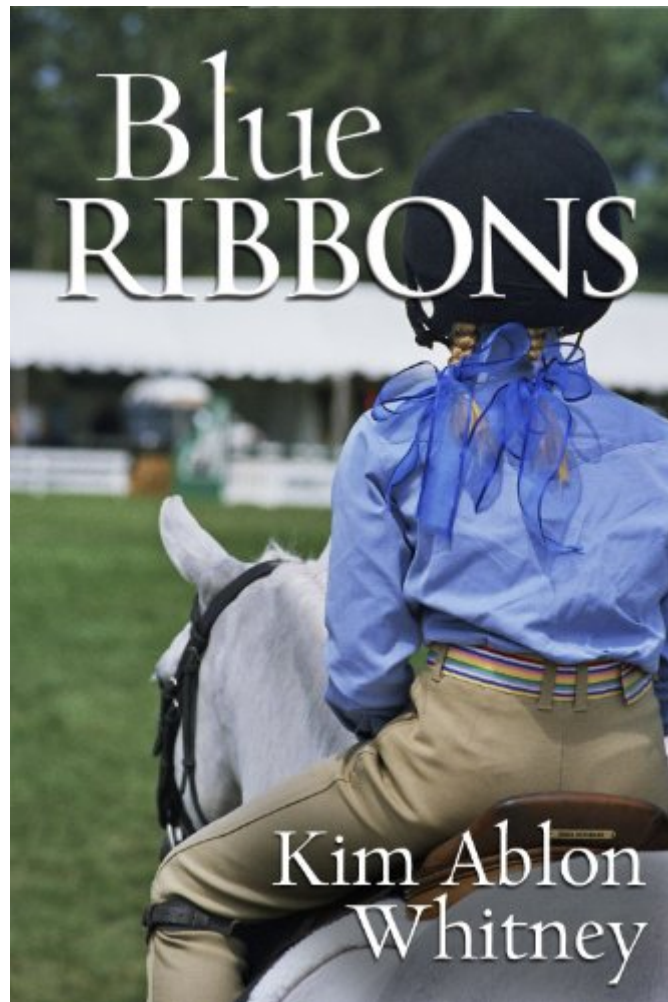


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Blue Ribbons



Synopsis

Regan Sternlicht has always had the best ponies on the 'A' Circuit. So it's no surprise when her mother wants to buy Woodland's Tried and True as her next medium pony hunter. But what if Regan doesn't want another fancy pony to add to her string? What if she wants to be more like her friends at the farm: Hailey, who has only one pony, and Jane, who brings along her father's project ponies. Regan has decided what you want doesn't really matter when your mom is in remission from cancer. Join the three girls for a summer, culminating in the USEF Pony Finals, where they will make decisions and face challenges inside and outside of the show ring that will change their lives and their friendship forever.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

On the surface, it looks as if 13-year-old Regan has it all: "wealthy, doting parents, two successful show ponies, a room full of blue ribbons, and an opportunity to own the year's most dazzling show pony that all Regan's friends would give their right arms for. It's enough to make any girl's head spin. But here's the rub. Regan doesn't want the new pony. She wants her mother's cancer to go away. It's been in remission and now there are whispered conversations between her parents and neither one is telling Regan the truth about what's going

on. All her mom wants to talk about is Tyler, the pony she wants to buy. He means far more to her than he does to Regan — so of course, Regan accepts the pony, pretends to be grateful, and worries about her mother in private. It doesn't help, either, that Regan's two best friends envy her, albeit quietly. Hailey's mother works hard and sacrifices a lot so that her daughter can have an A-rated pony. Then there's Jane whose father buys ponies for Jane to bring along, only to sell them when they're ready for the big time. But both these girls have what Regan desperately wants: a healthy mother who isn't going to leave them. With all this going on, *Blue Ribbons* isn't — just another pony book. It has depth and issues that go far beyond the barn and who's winning the most blue ribbons. Reading this extremely well-written and fascinating book has given me a much deeper understanding of a girl who's facing enormous issues (and dealing with them), along with details about a part of the competitive horse world I knew nothing about. The author herself has been there and done that. She speaks from first-hand experience, and she clearly knows kids, too. *Blue Ribbons* will appeal to upper middle grade/tween readers as well as young adults and even older. I'm a grandmother and I could not put this book down. Highly recommended.

Regan's mom knows she has one last summer, and she's decided the best way to spend it is to buy her daughter one of the nation's top show ponies. Regan loves ponies and loves showing them. It should be a dream come true. But to Regan, Tyler represents all her fears about her mother's cancer and all the things her parents won't tell her about it. Kim Ablon Whitney knows the horse world, and writes clearly, realistically, and compellingly about the people and horses within it. The story — of a girl who has everything a horsey girl could want except a mother who isn't facing a terminal illness — is sweet and sad and rich and real. The horse details are excellent and real. The characters are well-developed, each with their own issues and needs. The friendship between the three girls is deep and interesting. This is a children's novel, but any adult would enjoy it, and I think even someone who didn't eat and breathe horses would find much to appreciate in this story. The story is woven into contemporary events, people and institutions, which makes it a little extra fun. It's very like her earlier book, *The Perfect Distance*, and also compares favorably to one of the classics in horse show fiction, Jean Slaughter Doty's *The Monday Horses*.

As a former competitive pony rider, this is one of the first books I've come across about the world of the privileged and pricey pony hunters and the young girls who compete them. It gets all the details about the show world just right (anyone who shows on the A Circuit will recognize a lot of the

people, places, and things in this book) and turns the usual story about girls who show on the A circuit on its head. Instead of the girl who dreams of having the winning pony, Regan is the girl who wants to have a more regular pony that hasn't won everything there is to win. I liked that the other girls in the barn had interesting stories too and that the girls cared about more than just winning.

I just love this book was written and the details of the hunter/jumper scenes that were described were right on! You can tell the writer knows what she is talking about! Having use to show hunters, it was very nice to actually read a book that is 100% correct on all details of the horse show scene! I just loved this book and look forward to reading any future books by Kim!

As someone who does not ride horses, I really enjoyed reading this book because it gave me a good window into the world of competitive riding. This book was very detailed and I think people who ride will enjoy the level of detail which shows that Ablon Whitney really knows what she's talking about! But beyond the horseback riding element of the book, I loved that there were many other themes weaved beautifully into the story. There was the complicated issue of Regan's relationship with her ill mother, the guilt involved with being privileged but not necessarily wanting the things that are handed to you, and the idea that it feels better to work hard at something you're passionate about and not win versus not trying as hard but coming out on top. I also really enjoyed the complexities of Regan's relationships with her best friends, how they cleverly solved the mystery of where one of the horses came from, and the budding romance with her friend's brother. As an animal lover I also appreciated the focus on treating animals well. Overall, I found this book to be a great read with well-developed characters and a great message!

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