

Title: *Heroine*
Author: Mindy McGinnis
Genre: Realistic Fiction

Reviewer's Name and Grade: Oliver W. 8th Grade

Date Reviewed: June 27, 2020

Mickey Catalan is adopted and is the catcher for her high school softball team in Ohio. She is in her senior year of high school. Her mom is a divorced ob-gyn who is unable to have children. When she is driving with her best friend Carolina Galarza and she suddenly crashes, she is flung out of the car and severely injures her right hip. Mickey has three screws put in her hip and doesn't have a good chance of recovering before softball conditioning starts. Mickey always wants to project herself as a strong leader. She isn't very good with words and only feels at home when she's playing softball or is training. When Mickey's doctor prescribes some of the painkiller OxyContin to her, she realizes that it doesn't just take the pain away, it makes her feel good. She starts taking doses more often than she should, and when she runs out early, her doctor won't prescribe her more. Mickey meets a friendly elderly woman named Edith who sells Oxy, and she starts to buy from her. Mickey meets some friends at Edith's and realizes that taking Oxy makes her more able to socialize with people. When her tolerance increases and she needs to buy more to get the same effect, Mickey realizes that she doesn't have enough money. Mickey sells her mom's wedding ring to get more money and steals a man with cancer's pills at the hospital one time.

When the softball season starts, Mickey realizes that she needs to continue to up her dose. She tells herself that she isn't doing anything wrong. That she is just using a little bit of a drug that her doctor slightly underprescribed. She tells herself that she *needs* Oxy to get through the softball season, and will quit right after softball ends. Her life becomes all about deciding how much Oxy to take, and how to cover it up. Some days she feels great, but other days when she takes a little too much or too little, she starts to act stupidly. When Edith's last supplier of Oxy dies, Mickey is left with very little Oxy to get her through the day. She starts to experience withdrawal. Her dad's new wife, Devra, is a recovered addict. So when Mickey goes to her dad's house for dinner, she searches through all the cabinets trying to find anything that will make her feel better. When Devra calls Mickey's mom to tell her that she thinks Mickey is using drugs, her mom starts to become suspicious. Mickey is now willing to do anything to hide the truth from her mom. When her mom asks where her wedding ring went, Mickey tells her mom that Carolina accidentally got pregnant and needed an abortion, and that she had to help Carolina get the money for the procedure.

Mickey, desperate for more Oxy, decides to switch to heroin, which is cheaper. She starts to inject heroin with a needle and needs to wear long sleeves to cover the bruises on her arm where her veins popped. Mickey's relationships with her friends and family start to become very poor. She sees all her softball friends in a group chat without her. Mickey starts to have trouble paying for the heroin, and her life becomes a mess. Mickey's softball performance becomes very unpredictable, and her life starts to spiral out of control.

This book takes place pretty modernly in the year 2005 or after. I know this because there is mention of the NCIS episode that talks about OxyContin, which was released in 2005. Medicines such as Cymbalta are also mentioned, which were released in the 2000s.

Did the plot keep you interested?

Yes, the plot kept me interested. There was always something new added to the book, a new obstacle that Mickey had to face to get drugs, or new tensions between her friends.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of the book was pretty good. The author continued to add new factors into the story, but still spent a good amount of time showing the reader what was going on in Mickey's head. I think that the author reached a good balance of having different scenes and also describing the thought process that was going on in Mickey's head. The author showed how all Mickey ever really thought about was the next time she could get some Oxy or heroin.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

There is occasional profanity in this book, and many of the characters use drugs. I think this book would be appropriate for readers in grades 7 and up.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to readers who enjoy books about high schoolers, and the many challenges they may face when they grow up into adulthood. I think this book is for readers who don't mind slightly sad books.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

I think it would be helpful for teens reading this book to know that this book is about someone who has lost control of her own life and does many stupid things. There are detailed descriptions of how a person using drugs might feel, as well as how they might feel when experiencing withdrawal and the many downsides of using drugs.

I would rate this book *4 stars*. I think that this book is important for all people to read. It shows in detail how using drugs really messes up your life. Your life becomes all about acting normal and getting the drug. But this book also shows the effect of using drugs on a person's social life, which I think is important. I thought that the author did a good job describing what was going on in Mickey's head as she chose to keep using drugs, even when she found out she was completely healed. At the beginning of the book, a small scene was provided that actually happened at the end of the story. I liked this a lot because it made me want to figure out how the scene related to the story, making it almost like a mystery. The reason why I didn't rate this book 5 stars was because I think this book spent a little too long describing scenes about Mickey playing softball, which got a little boring. I think the author wanted to emphasize the point that Mickey using Oxy and heroin ultimately caused her softball performance to worsen, as she became very unpredictable, but I started to lose interest after a few scenes of her softball playing. I think that taking some scenes of Mickey training and playing softball out of the book and making it more compact would have made a better story that would have kept me wanting to read more.