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# Lucky Strikes



## Synopsis

With her mama recently dead and her pa sight unseen since birth, Amelia is suddenly in charge of her younger brother and sister—and of the family gas station. Harley Blevins, local king and emperor of Standard Oil, is in hot pursuit to clinch his fuel monopoly. To keep him at bay and keep her family out of foster care, Melia must come up with a father—and fast. And so when a hobo rolls out of a passing truck, Melia grabs opportunity by its beard. Can she hold off the hounds till she comes of age?

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 690 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Henry Holt and Co. (BYR) (July 5, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1627793909

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Product Dimensions: 5.7 x 1.1 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 19 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #502,192 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #52 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Homelessness & Poverty](#) #164 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Orphans & Foster Homes](#) #233 in [Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > 20th Century](#)

Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 8 Up "Notable adult author Bayard tries his hand at writing for young teens with the story of 14-year-old Virginia-born Amelia. Raised with no father and an ailing mother, Amelia has been forced into the role of head of household for most of her young life. When her mother passes away, Amelia takes it upon herself to keep what's left of her small family together. With no parents to help and the Great Depression still having its effect on businesses, the family service station is losing money fast. In an effort to keep the station running and prevent her siblings from being sent to separate foster homes, Amelia devises a plan to turn a homeless drifter into a makeshift father. Can she convince the town that Hiram is her long-lost father, allowing them to evade child services? Or

will bringing a homeless man into her family lead to more trouble? Bayard deftly depicts life in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Reading about the poverty experienced by the characters will bring awareness to the struggles families endured during the Depression. VERDICT A great read for history buffs.âPaula Bonifer, Pendleton Public Library, OR

"Sublime. . . . a near-perfect novel, rich in voice and emotion. Much like Melia herself, it is brash with bravado, barely concealing an inviting layer of warmth at its core." âThe New York Times Book Review on Lucky Strikes "a novel that is narratively gripping, emotionally astute and deeply enjoyable." âThe Washington Post on Lucky Strikes "this is a darn good yarn with plenty of room for rooting and more than a few laughs." âBooklist, starred review on Lucky Strikes "the story hurtles to a surprising, honest conclusionâthe "you" addressed in the first line is a tender surprise. A grand adventure." âKirkus, starred review on Lucky Strikes "Featuring a heroine as pragmatic and resourceful as Mary Call from *Where the Lilies Bloom*, adult author Bayard's (*Roosevelt's Beast*) poignant Depression-era novel traces the struggles of 14-year-old Melia Hoyle and her siblings after their mother's death." âPublishers Weekly, starred review on Lucky Strikes "Joining the ranks of Scout from Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Frankie from Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding*, Melia is a southern force to be reckoned with. . . . Although Louis Bayard is best known for his historical mysteries (*The Pale Blue Eye*) and his *Downton Abbey* recaps in the *New York Times*, his foray into young adult literature may be his finest work yet." âShelf Awareness, starred review on Lucky Strikes "Lionhearted Ameliaâs spirit is relentless and full of moxie. . . . a stunning tale. *Lucky Strikes* is a captivating read with a lot of heart. Sure to appeal to mature audiences that love strong storytelling, language, and historical fiction, as well as stories about misfits and found family." âVOYA, starred review on Lucky Strikes *The Pale Blue Eye* "Shockingly clever and devoutly unsentimental . . . reads like a lost classic. Bayard reinvigorates historical fiction." âThe New York Times Book Review "Brilliantly plotted and completely absorbing, ending with the kind of shock that few novelists are able to deliver." âSunday Times (London) "Mr. Timothy A dazzling blend of literary fiction and white-knuckle thriller." âPeople

I picked up this middle grade/YA novel because I love how Louis Bayard creates a world and populates it with characters who live and breathe. I love how he invites the reader in for a visit. And wow, what a world. For young readers ready to move on to more emotionally rich fiction, this book provides a safe place for their transition to more complex novels. As an adult reader, I laughed out loud, then fought back a tear or two. A stunning delight of a story that explores the meaning of

family and of fight and how we turn into the people we are, told with wit and spunk.

Sometimes reading a novel meant for upper elementary/jr. high kids can take me back to what it was like to read when I was young: when reading meant getting swept up in a story because you cared so much about the characters. This novel, like many classics for that age provide both entertainment and sustenance. Reading it gave me a wonderful shot of encouragement, (the character's pluck and grit is contagious) as well as hope. I'll be buying one for my 82 year old mother, and reading it to my 10 year old son. Wonderful work.

Lucky Strikes has been my favourite read of the summer. I love this book. I love Melia. I love her family, the people in her life who give her strength, and her piss-on-em outlook on life. Gutsy with a capital G. And yes, I now love Louis Bayard for his craftsmanship wordsmithing and punch'em in the heart narrative power. Gee, I wish I could write like that. DrL

I'm a big fan of Louis Bayard, but wasn't sure if I would like a Y/A oriented book. I am so glad I took a chance! It was a wonderful story and, as usual, his characters were very real to me. Bayard writes in a much different voice here, although I think that's true with most of his novels, and once again he captures the time frame and characters perfectly. I'm not going to recap the story, as other reviewers have already done a fine job of that, but if you are wondering if this is a book that adults would enjoy - yes, it most definitely is!! I anxiously await Mr. Bayard's next book, no matter which audience he writes it for.

Really enjoyable book. I was sad to see it come to an end.

Terrific story line  
Great writing  
This book is a keeper!

Bought as a gift, she enjoyed it.

Fourteen-year-old Amelia has been taking care of things at home for a while by the time her mama passes. She knows all about running the family gas station and she's fair to middling when it comes to taking care of her younger brother and sister, Earle and Lucey. The only problem is, Melia isn't sure that the state will see it that way if anyone finds out they don't have an adult taking care of them. It's bad enough that Melia is scraping the bottom of the barrel to keep the gas station afloat

while Harley Blevins eyes them with a mind to buy--or run them out of business. Melia certainly has no intention of letting her and her siblings wind up in foster care and split up. No way. All Melia has to do is keep her family together and keep the gas station running until she comes of age and can adopt Earle and Lucey. No easy feat with no adult in sight. When a hobo literally falls in her path, Melia thinks she might have found exactly what she needs to keep everyone fooled. She just needs everyone to play along for a little while in *Lucky Strikes* (2016) by Louis Bayard. *Lucky Strikes* is Bayard's first historical novel written for younger readers. This book is pretty solid middle grade fare although because Amelia is fourteen it technically falls under the umbrella of YA. This book is narrated by Melia in a breezy and conversational style. Throughout the book she is talking to someone (addressed as "you") although readers don't learn who exactly that is until the final pages of the story. Bayard uses his expertise as an author of historical fiction to bring 1934 Walnut Ridge, Virginia to life. *Lucky Strikes* is filled with vivid imagery and detailed descriptions that will immediately bring readers into the story as well as its unusual settings. This novel makes 1934 and the Great Depression immediately approachable to readers without bogging the story down in extraneous historical facts. Amelia is a plucky, self-starter of a heroine who doesn't waste time on sentimentality when there is work to be done. While she often feels a bit too old to be a fourteen-year-old--particularly because of her pragmatism--it is possibly a side-effect of her having sensibilities from a very different time. The story also largely works because Amelia is fourteen which lends urgency to her need to find an adult to act as a stand-in parent. *Lucky Strikes* is a madcap story about perseverance, friendship, and how sometimes family can be found in the most unlikely places. Recommended for fans of historical fiction and fast-paced stories.

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