



Pay It Forward: A Novel

By Catherine Ryan Hyde

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THE MIRACLE OF INNOCENCE

The story of how a boy who believed in the goodness of human nature set out to change the world.

Pay It Forward is a wondrous and moving novel about Trevor McKinney, a twelve-year-old boy in a small California town who accepts the challenge that his teacher gives his class, a chance to earn extra credit by coming up with a plan to change the world for the better -- and to put that plan into action.

The idea that Trevor comes up with is so simple and so naïve that when others learn of it they are dismissive. Even Trevor himself begins to doubt when his "pay it forward" plan seems to founder on a combination of bad luck and the worst of human nature.

What is his idea? Trevor chooses three people for whom he will do a favor, and then when those people thank him and ask how they might pay him back, he will tell them that instead of paying him back, they should each "pay it forward" by choosing three people for whom they can do favors, and in turn telling those people to pay it forward. It's nothing less than a human chain letter of kindness and good will.

Does his plan work? No. And yes -- it works wonderfully, but only after it has seemed to Trevor that maybe all his efforts have been for naught. The first person he chooses to help -- a homeless man to whom he gives his paper-route money so he can make himself presentable enough to find a job -- disappoints him by returning to a life of dissolution and eventually ending up in jail. The second is a lady on his paper route, old and alone and infirm, and with a garden that needs tending. No sooner has Trevor begun to help her, however, than she goes and dies on him.

The third person Trevor hopes to help is his teacher, Reuben St. Clair, a scarred, bitter, untrusting man who seems to come truly alive only when in front of his class. Trevor's goal is to match him with his mother, Arlene, a pretty, hardworking woman who has raised Trevor more or less alone, but who Trevor feels has a lot to offer the right man. It proves not to be a match made in heaven, though, and Trevor's dismay only deepens as he watches these two people come

so close to achieving the connection he wants for them, only to turn away at the last moment.

Failure seems inevitable, and Trevor is resigned. What he doesn't realize, however, is that there really is a good side to human nature, and that the tiny seed of kindness and caring he planted has taken root. In neighborhoods in other California towns, and as far away as Los Angeles, there are others following the rules of "paying it forward." Soon fame comes knocking, bringing with it excitement and an unforeseen tragedy.

In the end, *Pay It Forward* is the story of seemingly ordinary people made extraordinary by the simple faith of a child. In the tradition of the successful and inspirational television show *Touched by an Angel*, and the phenomenally successful novel and film *Forrest Gump*, *Pay It Forward* is a work of charm, wit, and remarkable inspiration, a story of hope for today and for many tomorrows to come.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Catherine Ryan Hyde's *Pay It Forward* takes as its premise the bumper-sticker phrase "Think Globally, Act Locally" and builds a novel around it. The hero of her story is young Trevor McKinney, a 12-year-old whose imagination is sparked by an extra-credit assignment in Social Studies: "Think of an idea for world change, and put it into action." Trevor's idea is deceptively simple: do a good deed for three people, and in exchange, ask each of them to "pay it forward" to three more. "So nine people get helped. Then those people have to do twenty-seven.... Then it sort of spreads out." Trevor's early attempts to get his project off the ground seem to end in failure: a junkie he befriends ends up back in jail; an elderly woman whose garden he tends dies unexpectedly. But even after the boy has given up on his plan, his acts of kindness bear unexpected fruit, and soon an entire movement is underway and spreading across America.

Trevor, meanwhile, could use a little help himself. His father walked out on the family, and his mother, Arlene, is fighting an uphill battle with alcoholism, poor judgment in men, and despair. When the boy's new Social Studies teacher, Reuben St. Clair, arrives on the scene, Trevor sees in him not only a source of inspiration for how to change the world, but also the means of altering his mother's life. Yet Reuben has his own set of problems. Horribly scarred in Vietnam, he is reluctant to open himself up to the possibility of rejection--or love. Indeed, the relationship between Arlene and Reuben is central to the novel as these two damaged people learn to "pay forward" the trust and affection Trevor has given them.

Hyde tells her tale from many different perspectives, using letters, diary entries, and first- and third-person narratives from the various people whose lives Trevor's project touches. Jerry Busconi, for example, the addict Trevor tried to help, one night finds himself talking a young woman out of jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge:

I'm a junkie, Charlotte. I'm always gonna be a junkie. I ain't never gonna be no fine, upstanding citizen. But then I thought, hell. Just pay it forward anyway. Kid tried to help me. Okay, it didn't work. Still, I'm trying to help you. Maybe you'll jump. I don't know. But I tried, right? But let me tell you one thing. I woke up one morning and somebody gave me a chance. Just outta nowhere. It was like a miracle. Now, how do you know that won't happen to you tomorrow?

Pay It Forward is reminiscent of Frank Capra's classic *It's a Wonderful Life*. Like the film, this novel has a steely core of gritty reality beneath its optimism: yes, one person *can* make a difference, can help to make the world a better place, but sickness, pain, heartache, and tragedy will still always be a part of the human condition. If at times Hyde stumbles a bit while negotiating the razor-thin line between honest feeling and sentimentality, it's generally not for long. And the occasional lapse into artificially colored emotion can be forgiven when weighed against the courage it takes to write so unabashedly hopeful a story in such cynical times. --*Sheila Bright*

From Publishers Weekly

An ordinary boy engineers a secular miracle in Hyde's (Funerals for Horses) winning second novel, set in small-town 1990s California. Twelve-year-old Trevor McKinney, the son of Arlene, a single mom working two jobs, and Ricky, a deadbeat absentee dad, does not seem well-positioned to revolutionize the world. But when Trevor's social studies teacher, Reuben St. Clair, gives the class an extra-credit assignment, challenging his students to design a plan to change society, Trevor decides to start a goodwill chain. To

begin, he helps out three people, telling each of them that instead of paying him back, they must "pay it forward" by helping three others. At first, nothing seems to work out as planned, not even Trevor's attempt to bring Arlene and Reuben together. Granted, Trevor's mother and his teacher are an unlikely couple: she is a small, white, attractive, determined but insecure recovering alcoholic; he is an educated black man who lost half his face in Vietnam. But eventually romance does blossom, and unbeknownst to Trevor, his other attempts to help do "pay forward," yielding a chain reaction of newsworthy proportions. Reporter Chris Chandler is the first to chase down the story, and Hyde's narrative is punctuated with excerpts from histories Chandler publishes in later years (*Those Who Knew Trevor Speak* and *The Other Faces Behind the Movement*), as well as entries from Trevor's journal. Trevor's ultimate martyrdom, and the extraordinary worldwide success of his project, catapult the drama into the realm of myth, but Hyde's simple prose rarely turns preachy. Her Capraesque theme that one person can make a difference may be sentimental, but for once, that's a virtue. \$250,000 ad/promo; BOMC and QPB alternates; 7-city author tour; film rights optioned by Warner Bros. (Feb.)

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From School Library Journal

YA-Eighth-grader Trevor is challenged by his social-studies teacher to do something that will change the world. And he does. His rule is to do one very good deed for three different people, telling them that rather than paying him back, they are to "pay it forward" to three others. When the numbers grow exponentially, The Movement starts and the world is changed. Hyde uses a variety of writing styles and techniques to present the story: a first-person account by Chris, the journalist who writes about The Movement; excerpts from his books; transcripts of his interviews; entries from Trevor's diary; and a third-person narration. The central character changes in these chapters as the story moves forward but these shifts are clear enough that most readers should not be confused. A short, unsavory sexual episode results in a violent, sacrificial ending that is softened somewhat through foreshadowing. Since the film version of the book has already been cast, YAs are likely to be asking for it soon.

Claudia Moore, W. T. Woodson High School, Fairfax, VA

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lillian Carlucci:

Now a day individuals who Living in the era where everything reachable by connect with the internet and the resources inside can be true or not involve people to be aware of each info they get. How a lot more to be smart in getting any information nowadays? Of course the solution is reading a book. Reading a book can help individuals out of this uncertainty Information specially this Pay It Forward: A Novel book because book offers you rich info and knowledge. Of course the details in this book hundred % guarantees there is no doubt in it you probably know this.

Bonnie Skelton:

This book untitled Pay It Forward: A Novel to be one of several books which best seller in this year, this is because when you read this e-book you can get a lot of benefit upon it. You will easily to buy that book in the book shop or you can order it via online. The publisher with this book sells the e-book too. It makes you quicker to read this book, since you can read this book in your Smart phone. So there is no reason for your requirements to past this guide from your list.

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Jessie Adams:

Some individuals said that they feel bored when they reading a book. They are directly felt the idea when they get a half areas of the book. You can choose the actual book Pay It Forward: A Novel to make your own personal reading is interesting. Your personal skill of reading ability is developing when you like reading. Try to choose simple book to make you enjoy you just read it and mingle the sensation about book and reading through especially. It is to be initial opinion for you to like to wide open a book and study it. Beside that the e-book Pay It Forward: A Novel can to be your friend when you're sense alone and confuse in what must you're doing of their time.

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