



# Once Upon a Time

By Niki Daly

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A struggling young reader triumphs

There is something worrying Sarie at school. Every time her teacher says, “Children, take out your reading books,” Sarie feels sick. The letters in the book all run together, tripping her up so that she stumbles and falters, and the girls in the back always make fun of her. Only Sarie’s old friend, Auntie Anna, seems to understand that letters and words can be difficult things to grasp. And it is Auntie Anna, with the help of a book from her own daughter’s childhood, who makes a unique Sunday ritual out of giving Sarie the help she needs, until the letters that were once her adversaries begin to seem friendly – just in time for Sarie to prove herself to the laughing girls at school.

Niki Daly’s illustrations set Sarie’s tale under the vast and beautiful skies of the South African Karoo, and his encouraging story conveys the power and magic of a good book and the joy of having a good friend to share it with.

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## Once Upon a Time By Niki Daly Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Kindergarten-Grade 3-The long walk to school under the hot South African sky doesn't bother Sarie at all. It's the destination that troubles her, or more precisely, the classmates who giggle when she tries to read aloud and who later taunt her. On Sundays, she escapes to Auntie Anna's rusty, old car, and while Sarie pretends to drive, the two swap stories. When the child unearths a book from a crevice in the back seat, she reads it with the help of her aunt. Sarie thoroughly enjoys the Cinderella story, which Daly peoples with characters from the girl's life, a technique that portrays her connection to this reading experience with economy and style. Although Sarie continues to struggle in school, she has gained the self-assurance to carry on. The cycle of skill and confidence is set in motion, ultimately impacting her class performance. The author is as adept at conveying the anxiety that accompanies failure as he is at depicting the pride felt with success. Sarie tries envisioning the words in the school text as they appear when she's with her aunt: "-lots of friendly letters holding hands to form words that danced and sang together." The realistic watercolors contrast the shimmering vitality of the sun, Sarie, and Auntie Anna with the dusty earth and lackluster classmates. Endpapers of swirling letters suggest the story's theme. Those who pause long enough may see a message; readers at any stage will appreciate the struggle.

Wendy Lukehart, Washington DC Public Library

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From [Booklist](#)

PreS-K. Sarie dreads being called on to read aloud in class because the kids laugh at her stammering and stumbling. They even tease her after school. On Sunday while her family rests, Sarie runs across the veld to Auntie Anna's. Sitting in Auntie's rusty, wheel-less old car, she and Auntie pretend to go for a Sunday drive while Auntie tells stories of "once upon a time" when she was young and her car was shiny and new. Then Sarie reveals how much she hates reading aloud and being laughed at. When Sarie finds an old book stuck in the back seat, the Cinderella story becomes her own; with the help of a prince of a friend and her auntie's wisdom, she overcomes her problem. The beautiful watercolor illustrations, in Daly's typical style, ably capture the expanse of the South African setting and the depth of Sarie's emotion. The gentle, encouraging tone prevents the message from being heavy-handed or maudlin, making the story a charming testimonial to reading, friendship, and family bonds. *Julie Cummins*

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## Review

"The author is as adept at conveying the anxiety that accompanies failure as he is at depicting the pride felt with success...readers at any stage will appreciate the struggle." -- Starred, *School Library Journal*

"Daly once again captures a moment in a South African childhood and makes it universal with a simple story and beautiful watercolor illustrations. Sarie's confusion and subsequent joy are evident in her face as she and the reader discover the once-upon-a-time magic that reading offers together...an excellent choice for one-on-one sharing or lap story times." -- *Kirkus Reviews*

## Users Review

From reader reviews:

**Frank Dawson:**

Now a day folks who Living in the era where everything reachable by connect with the internet and the resources inside it can be true or not demand people to be aware of each information they get. How many people to be smart in having any information nowadays? Of course the correct answer is reading a book. Looking at a book can help men and women out of this uncertainty Information specifically this Once Upon a Time book because book offers you rich data and knowledge. Of course the details in this book hundred % guarantees there is no doubt in it you probably know this.

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**Robert Baxter:**

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