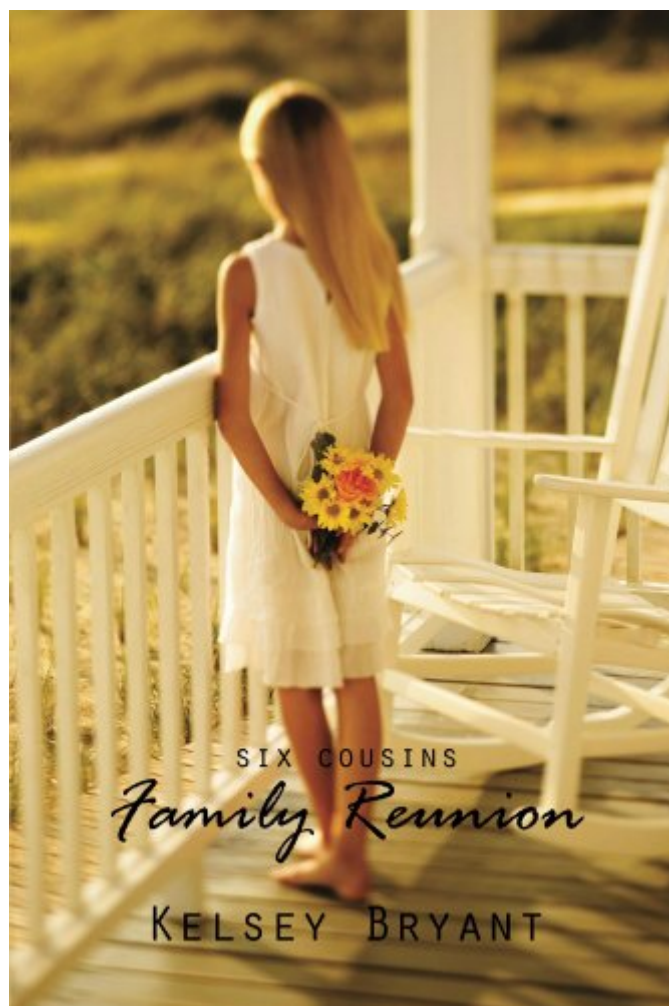


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Family Reunion (Six Cousins, Book 1)



Synopsis

Every word, every moment matters. Welcome to the Austin Family Reunion! 14-year-old Marielle Austin's parents and grandparents are hosting family for a week in the Texas hill country, and Marielle's five girl cousins are staying at her house. Emma and Caroline are her best friends. They like her, they're homeschooled and passionate about the Lord, the past, and books. Abby, Kailey, and Reanna are from Wisconsin and just as far away in background and interests. What's hot in the world now is what matters to them. Grandpa Will Austin has devised a series of projects for the six of them to complete. There's a shed to fix up, a missionary to interview, and a trail of clues to solve, leading to a treasure. If they finish by the end of the week and work together with love and understanding, they'll earn a prize beyond anything they could imagine! But difficulties surface right away. Bad attitudes and work ethics seem all Abby, Kailey, and Reanna can offer. Marielle, Emma, and Caroline are at a loss. What can they do to push the projects through? And more importantly, what can they do about their cousins, who won't welcome their friendship? How can they show love when it's hard even to feel it? Will the mysterious prize slip away, and with it any chance of relationship? This book, recommended for ages 12 and up, helps instill the importance of loving others, understanding differences between people, and focusing on what we have in common. Small things matter and every day counts when it comes to building good relationships.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I found this book extremely annoying. Why? It took me a while to boil it down, but I finally realized why: I was emotionally invested in each of the characters. Thus, I got annoyed when the three homeschool cousins looked down their pretty little noses at their non-homeschool cousins. And I got annoyed at the public schooled cousins for being bad-tempered and snooty to their other cousins. (Spoiler alert: don't worry, it all ends well :) I also found this book very interesting. The 6 cousins have to complete 3 projects in one week in order to gain a special prize. They are of such different backgrounds and interests, but Grandpa and their parents agree they will all enjoy this. BUT they have to get it done together. Mayhem ensues as the into-dresses, homeschooled, interested-in-literature, into-classical-music, long-hair, short-nails, modest, secluded, sweet, respectful, deeply Christian, Texan, country girlstry to get along with the into-fashion, public schooled, interested-in movies, into-pop-music, short-hair, long-nails, tight clothes, lots of friends and boy crazy, strong-willed, backtalking, moderately Christian, Wisconsin, city girls. Yeah. Talk about sparks! Want a clean read that kids of any age can enjoy? This is it. Want an interesting read with mystery and adventure? You got it! Plan on buying the next when available.

When I bought this book, I actually wasn't very excited to read it. Especially when I saw how long it was. Don't get me wrong, I LOVE long books. But a super long book entirely based around a week-long family reunion? Bo-riiiiing!! Boy, was I ever wrong! Perhaps you could write about a typical family reunion in just two chapters, but the Austin family does not host typical family reunions, and the length of the book fitted the story perfectly! This is the first book that I've ever read that was written in real-time. In other words, most long books span many years. This long book took about a week to read, and covered a week's worth of events. It made it that much more interesting and detailed, and helped me to connect with the story even better. Some people might think the story moved a little too slowly in parts, but I think it was refreshing to read and easier to internalize. This story is written from a Christian homeschooler's perspective, and upholds conservative, biblical

values. This is something I really appreciate! Marielle, Emma, and Caroline are thrust into a situation where they must interact with relatives who have different attitudes and outlooks on life. This creates tensions and struggles on both sides. Not only that, but all six girl cousins must learn to get along and work together in order to hopefully obtain a prize that they've been told is something they will all love. The book left me speculating what the prize might be right along with the girls, and, let me tell you, when I actually found out what it was, it came as just as much of a surprise to me as it did to the girls! This story has interesting drama and excitement around every corner. What made this book the most delightful is that Kelsey Bryant has a gift for developing personalities and depicting human nature. Her characters felt so real, and I was able to relate to them so much. And the Christian girls weren't depicted as perfect. They felt anger, they sometimes judged their cousins too harshly, and they didn't always think angelic thoughts or behave in a Christ-like way. But that made them so realistic, so believable, and so easy to relate to. Their struggles with wrong feelings weren't condoned, but they weren't downplayed or glossed over either. This gave this story its tangibility. Marielle, Emma, and Caroline worked through their struggles, and they looked to the Bible for the answers. This really helped me to examine and work through my own thoughts and attitudes toward those who hold different values from me. I highly recommend Family Reunion for all ages. The story was engaging, thought-provoking, and exciting!! I can't wait to read the second book in the series!~SarahAuthor & Teacherwww.brownsarahellen.com

3.5 stars, but I'm rounding up to 4. I have mixed feelings about this book. On the one hand, I really like the message and the growth of the characters. It's so realistic to have to learn to get along with people and have that not work out like you hope, even when you're trying your hardest. It really struck a chord with me to read about Marielle, Emma, and Caroline's struggles with how different their Wisconsin cousin were and how they could interact with them in light of that. The cousins and other characters were all well developed, and I mostly enjoyed the "treasure hunt" (especially the scene where Marielle, Emma, and Caroline pretend they're on a secret mission. I totally relate). But on the other hand...I was bored. It took me forever to get into this, and the constant back-and-forth of Marielle's feelings and the situations started to frustrate me. I just feel like it could've been shorter and that it would've been better shorter. Overall, not bad of a story. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to my younger sister. Good moral lesson and some interesting conflict, but I would've liked to see it edited down a bit.

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