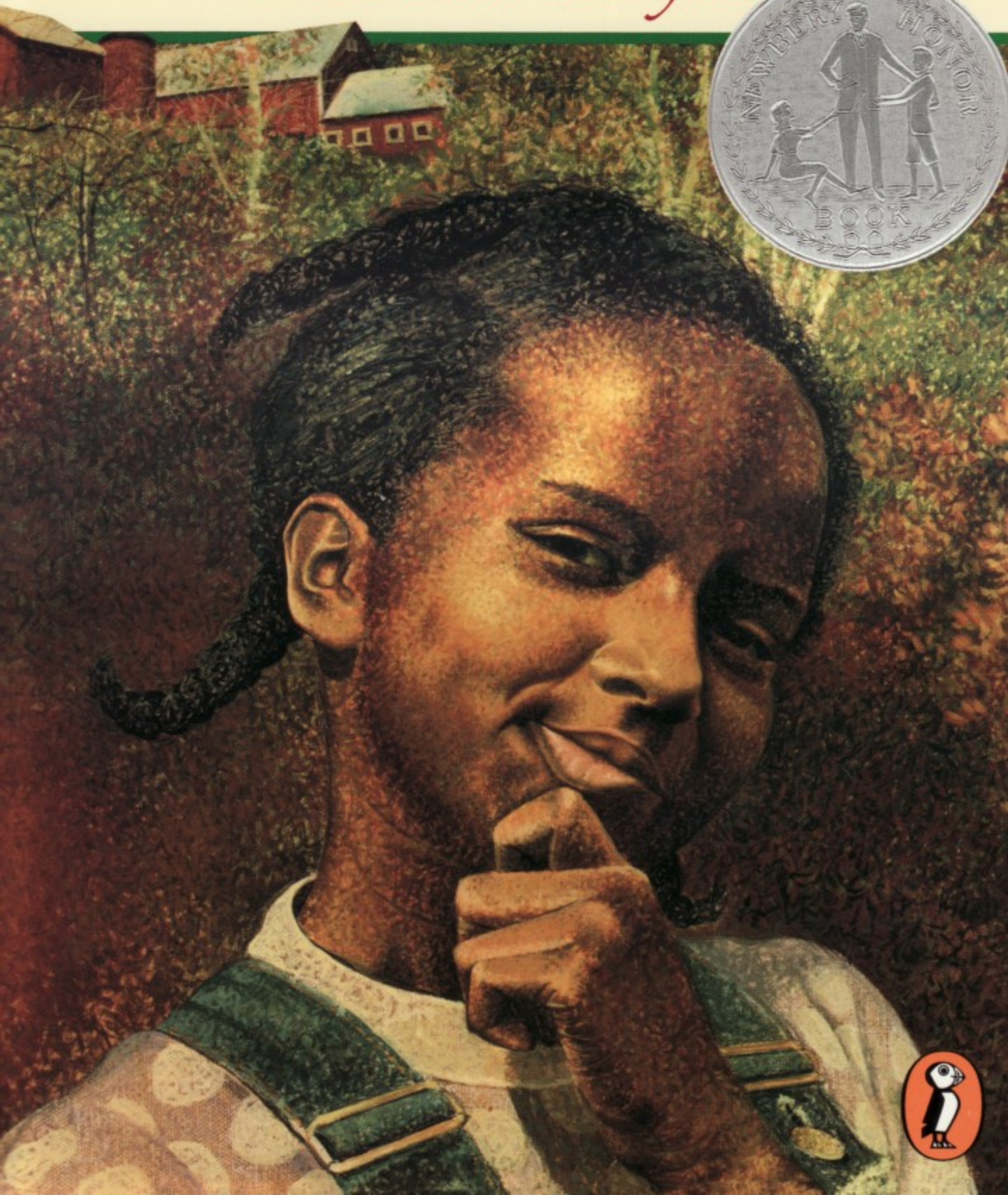


Bette Greene

author of *Summer of My German Soldier*

Philip Hall Likes Me.
I Reckon Maybe.



Philip Hall likes me.
I reckon maybe.

September

Mama set my morning bowl of steaming grits on the flowered oilcloth. "I don't want no daughter of mine filling up her head with that Hall boy today. You get yourself some learning, Beth."

I sprinkled some sugar on my grits and skimmed a spoonful from the top.

"You hear me a-speaking to you, girl?"

". . . Yes'm. But Philip Hall is my friend and—"

Mama shook her head like it almost wasn't worthwhile explaining it to me. "Beth, honey, you is so smart about

most things. How come the good Lord made you so dumb about Philip Hall?"

"He didn't!" I said.

"Sure enough he did," argued Mama. "Don't you see he only wants your company if Gordy or one of them Jones boys ain't around and when he runs out of mischief to fall into?"

"Now that's not true," I said, dropping my spoon noisily into the grits. "'Cause Philip Hall likes me. I reckon maybe. He's always inviting me over to his very own farm, now ain't that the truth?"

Ma pressed her hands against her wide waist. "That is the very thing I is speaking about," she said. "He's got you cleaning out his dairy barn—doing his work!"

"Well, I don't mind a bit," I told her. "He strummed some songs on his guitar while I worked. It was nice."

"You and your big sister better get on out of here, girl!" said Mama, wrapping her strong, dark arms around me. "Or you both going to miss the school bus." Her kiss made a smacking sound against my cheek. "Now get!"

Outside, my pa was throwing slop into the pig trough from a battered tin bucket. When he saw Anne, he called out, "EuuuuuWheee! Who that coming down the road in the starched-up dress?"

Annie smiled in that shy way she always does when she is being teased by the opposite sex. "Oh, Pa . . ."

Then Pa looked at me and asked, "Then somebody tell me who it is coming down the road in the faded jeans?"

Philip Hall likes me. I reckon maybe.

"I reckon it's one of your two girl children. Want any more hints?"

"Oh, give me another little hint," said Pa, letting his good, strong teeth show.

"I'm only the daughter that's the second-best arithmetic solver, the second-best speller, and the second-best reader in Miss Johnson's class."

Pa wiped the sweat from his forehead with the sleeve of his denim shirt. "That Hall boy again? Don't go telling me he's number-one best in everything."

"Everything," I said. "Just everything." And yet Pa's question started me wondering something I never wondered before. Is Philip Hall number one only 'cause I let him be? Afraid he wouldn't like me if I were best? Shucks no! And that's too silly to even think about.

The wind was a-blowing up the dust on the dry dirt road that ran between our pig and poultry farm and Mr. Hall's dairy farm. A long time ago my mama showed me what to do when the road is dry from lack of rain and the wind comes up to make matters worse. Secret is to walk along the grass at the very edge of the road. Takes longer, but at least you can get to the highway clean.

Long after I had walked halfway, I spotted his shirt as red as dime-store lipstick. Up there where the dirt road meets up with the blacktop.

"Hey, Philip! Hey, hey, *Phil-ip!*"

He heard me because the shirt could be seen suddenly going down then up, down then up. He called out, "Run!

No one gets the better of Beth Lambert.
Except, maybe, Philip Hall...



Philip Hall is the cutest, smartest boy in the sixth grade, and Beth Lambert loves him. The fact that he beats her in classwork, sports, and just about everything else doesn't particularly bother Beth at first. Then she realizes that Philip might be best in everything because she's *letting* him beat her. And coming out on top is just too natural a thing for Beth to hold back for very long!

◆ "I reckon Philip Hall can't help liking spunky, expansive Beth . . . and you'll like her, too."

—*Kirkus Reviews*, pointer review

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