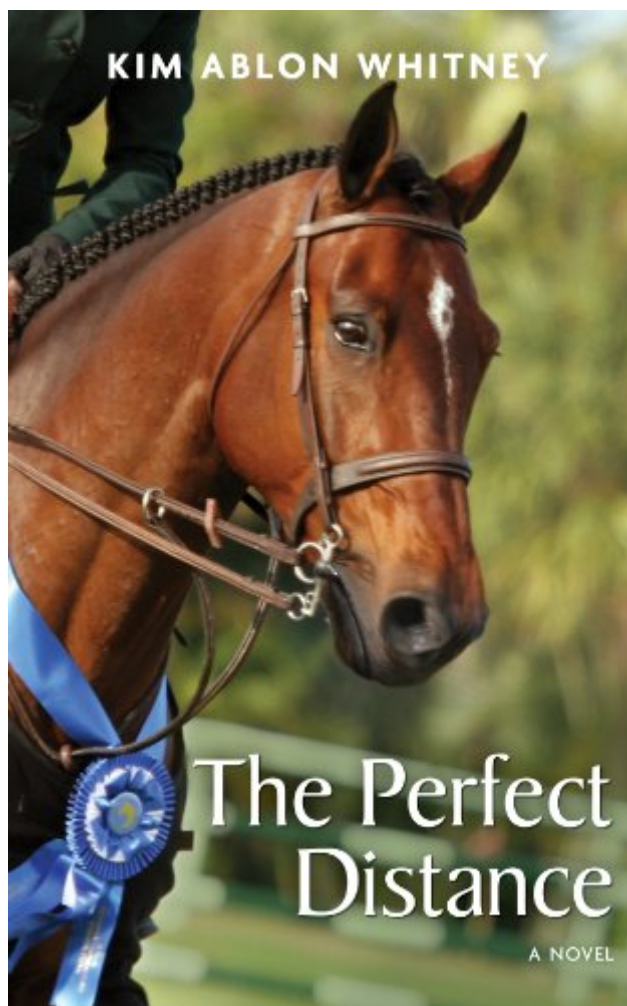


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# The Perfect Distance: A Novel



## Synopsis

Seventeen year-old Francie Martinez rides at West Hills, one of the top show stables in the country, where her father is the barn manager. She's dreamed of winning the Medal or Maclay Finals, and finally making her notoriously tough trainer, Rob Renaud, realize she has what it takes to be the best. Now it's her last junior year and the pressure is really on. But just when Francie needs to focus more than ever, everything in her life turns upside down. Can she ever beat Tara, whom Rob is counting on to win? Will her relationship with the new boy in the barn, or what she learns about Rob keep her from winning one of the coveted equitation finals? This is an updated version of the book that Random House released in 2005.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Kim AblonWhitney does not disappoint with THE PERFECT DISTANCE. Francie is a believable protagonist, unique and bicultural, yet a teal teenaged girl. The glimpse into the world of junior equitation championships is true to life and accurate in its equestrian details. I look forward to more of her work.

There's a dearth of good horse books (for kids and grownups) so when I find one this well-written, I am overjoyed. Kim Ablon Whitney's *The Perfect Distance* is a gem, not only because it's a rollicking good story, but because the horse details are spot on. So are the teenage characters as they deal with self-doubt, parental expectations, peer pressure, discrimination, and the trainer from hell. Well, not quite. Rob could've been worse, but he certainly gets up the kids' noses and makes Francie Martinez feel like she's never good enough for him, especially when compared to Tara, the barn's star rider. But Francie's father, Juan, is a wise man. He supports his daughter, quietly, while demonstrating a solid work ethic (he's the barn's manager), instilling a sense of responsibility in Francie, and setting realistic boundaries so she won't make the same mistakes that he did. Francie's a talented rider. She wants to ditch college and turn pro after the all-important Medal/Maclay finals they're all working toward. But Francie hasn't yet learned to believe in herself. It takes the friendship of an enigmatic boy who rides "just because it's fun" and the unfortunate death of a horse to help Francie realize her own strengths and come to terms with her goals. In a month or two, I will read this book again . . . I enjoyed it so much.

This is an excellent book for both avid riders and avid readers. The characters are wonderful, coming to life and managing to avoid the show circuit stereotypes that other books about showing fall prey to. The author paints each character vividly and believably, in a manner that truly reveals the human beings behind the stereotypes on the A Circuit. Francie's journey to self actualization is well done and interesting, and I love her little quirks. While I didn't enjoy this quite as much as Kim's latest release, *The Circuit*, I really appreciated the depths of the characters. The plot was well developed, avoiding the horse book clichés (Horse Whisperer, Backyard Rider On a \$10 Horse Winning Big, Little Rich Girl Relives "Gossip Girls" On Horseback, etc). This wasn't just a good horse book, it was a very well written book in general that I would have enjoyed reading even if I wasn't horse crazy. Definitely recommend!

I read this in one day, while home sick from work. Thus, it was an easy read, but that doesn't detract from its charm. A coming-of-age story that is not too saccharine or sappy, it's actually told from the perspective of a believable and likable character. I'm sure some readers may have some trouble

relating to Francie's goody-two-shoes-ness. But I WAS Francie in high school, focused on grades, horse shows, and other activities outside of school. I struggled to find my place in the microcosm of teenage high school pursuits, and always felt out of place when I tried to assimilate. I think this book addressed that issue well, and will be an enjoyable read for anyone who has ever felt like an outsider. Especially if horseback riding and competition put you on the outside to begin with. That said, her obsession with the cheated test felt tiresome after a while. I want to holler, "yes, you cheated! Move ON." I didn't mind that she felt guilty. I would have too. I did mind that the author kept coming back to it again and again. I would recommend to all those who enjoy horsey-books who are looking for an easy read and a fairly accurate portrayal of one facet of the horse world.

this book is amazing. highly recommended. once again kim has written an outstanding book. i find myself relating with francie, as i've dealt with some real brats. i love how it's not so stereotypical "poor underdog wins everything and is the best rider ever because that stuff isn't realistic. great read

This was a great read. The author did a great job of explaining the process of preparing and trading for junior finals. Alison thought explained what jumping is like without getting overly technical. Characters were well developed and you could really feel the emotions.

At first I questioned, are the rich and competitive American horse people so horrible and nasty, and if so do we have to have anything to do with them, certainly not entertaining them in our minds in our collective fictional dreams. In this novel the crucial technical details about equestrian matters are correct. The writing is good, flows well, and the dialogue believable. However, the gritty realism of selfish, bigoted, and unsportsmanlike behaviour is not my idea of a good time. One of the important factors inherent in a pony book is the fantasy that good triumphs over evil and that people improve and become better people. I found that in the end it was a relief that our protagonist escaped from the ruthless cut throat world of horrid horse people into a safer more normal everyday world.

I really enjoyed this single stand alone book as well as her series of three books. I like Kim's style of writing.

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