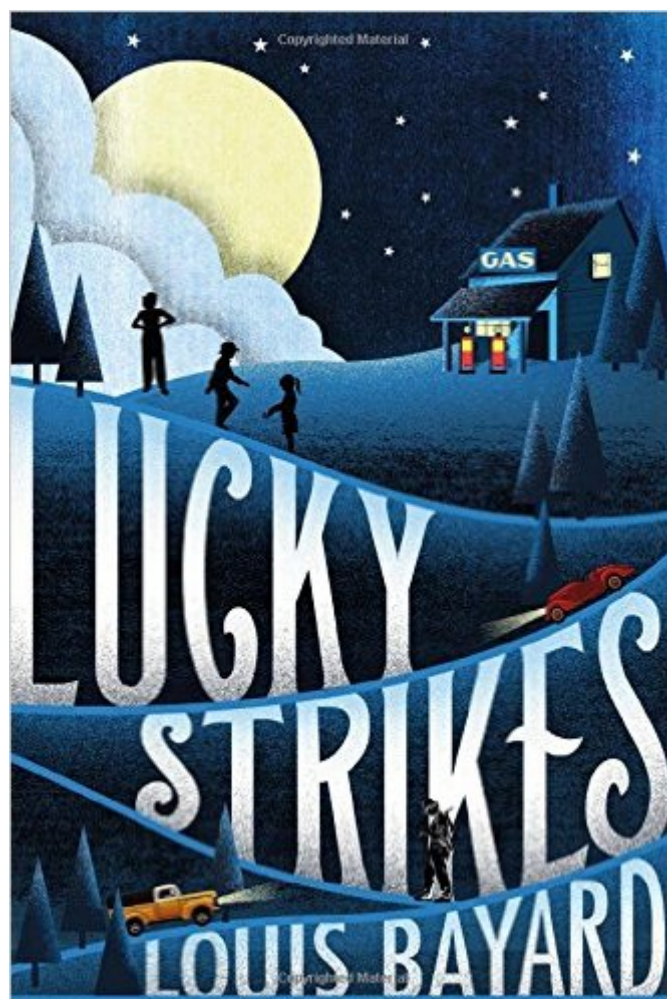


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# Lucky Strikes



## Synopsis

With her mama recently dead and her pa sight unseen since birth, Amelia is suddenly in charge of her younger brother and sister—and of the family gas station. Harley Blevins, local king and emperor of Standard Oil, is in hot pursuit to clinch his fuel monopoly. To keep him at bay and keep her family out of foster care, Melia must come up with a father—and fast. And so when a hobo rolls out of a passing truck, Melia grabs opportunity by its beard. Can she hold off the hounds till she comes of age?

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 690 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 320 pages

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Product Dimensions: 5.7 x 1.1 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (12 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #62,208 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #7 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Homelessness & Poverty #24 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Orphans & Foster Homes #31 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > 20th Century

Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Fourteen-year-old Amelia has been taking care of things at home for a while by the time her mama passes. She knows all about running the family gas station and she's fair to middling when it comes to taking care of her younger brother and sister, Earle and Lucey. The only problem is, Melia isn't sure that the state will see it that way if anyone finds out they don't have an adult taking care of them. It's bad enough that Melia is scraping the bottom of the barrel to keep the gas station afloat while Harley Blevins eyes them with a mind to buy--or run them out of business. Melia certainly has no intention of letting her and her siblings wind up in foster care and split up. No way. All Melia has to do is keep her family together and keep the gas station running until she comes of age and can

adopt Earle and Lucey. No easy feat with no adult in sight. When a hobo literally falls in her path, Melia thinks she might have found exactly what she needs to keep everyone fooled. She just needs everyone to play along for a little while in *Lucky Strikes* (2016) by Louis Bayard. *Lucky Strikes* is Bayard's first historical novel written for younger readers. This book is pretty solid middle grade fare although because Amelia is fourteen it technically falls under the umbrella of YA. This book is narrated by Melia in a breezy and conversational style. Throughout the book she is talking to someone (addressed as "you") although readers don't learn who exactly that is until the final pages of the story. Bayard uses his expertise as an author of historical fiction to bring 1934 Walnut Ridge, Virginia to life. *Lucky Strikes* is filled with vivid imagery and detailed descriptions that will immediately bring readers into the story as well as its unusual settings. This novel makes 1934 and the Great Depression immediately approachable to readers without bogging the story down in extraneous historical facts. Amelia is a plucky, self-starter of a heroine who doesn't waste time on sentimentality when there is work to be done. While she often feels a bit too old to be a fourteen-year-old--particularly because of her pragmatism--it is possibly a side-effect of her having sensibilities from a very different time. The story also largely works because Amelia is fourteen which lends urgency to her need to find an adult to act as a stand-in parent. *Lucky Strikes* is a madcap story about perseverance, friendship, and how sometimes family can be found in the most unlikely places. Recommended for fans of historical fiction and fast-paced stories.

I picked up this middle grade/YA novel because I love how Louis Bayard creates a world and populates it with characters who live and breathe. I love how he invites the reader in for a visit. And wow, what a world. For young readers ready to move on to more emotionally rich fiction, this book provides a safe place for their transition to more complex novels. As an adult reader, I laughed out loud, then fought back a tear or two. A stunning delight of a story that explores the meaning of family and of fight and how we turn into the people we are, told with wit and spunk.

\*I won this book in a GOODREADS FIRSTREADS GIVEAWAY\*When this beautiful little hardback came in the mail I felt I wanted to read it right then. This is a story about hard times and perseverance, family and what you will do to keep it all together. Amelia's (Melia) mom died and they buried her in a grave in an area her mom liked to be. So now Melia is the sole owner of Brenda's Oasis, the gas station, grocery store, and vehicle repairs. Melia is still a child just a few years shy of being able to adopt her brother and sister (Janey and Earle). Every day Melia worries how she is going to pull this off and keep everything together. Let me tell you that the character of Melia is

something else. She's hard, she gets it done, she one hell of a mechanic and has a mouth like a sailor. Melia tells their lawyer (Chester) like it is and that she's going to figure it all out. All the while she's fighting off the jerk down the road that wants to buy out her station. He has every other station up and down Virginia. He's not a good guy and does some really terrible things to this family and I will not dignify him with a name even though he's fictional. Melia has some really good friends in the truckers that come by every morning and evening to get their cigarettes and gas and chew the fat for awhile. They were kind enough to bring some things for the family. One man is meaner than a skunk but he likes Melia because she fixed his truck and he always tells her if she need something let him know. Pretty much while cussing about this and that :-)) I have already mentioned that Melia is one smart cookie so when a hobo sort of lands, yes lands, on her property.. she decides to clean him up and make him her father so that she can keep the family together. She really doesn't give him the chance to decide, she decides for him and that's that. This hobo would be a man called Hiram Watts. After a little bit, Hiram fits right into the family and he actually helps them make more money than they do. He works in the store for them as before, they would just leave out a plate and hope people would be honest and leave the right amount of money. Not so much everyone, but Hiram had a way of making people buy more than they would have and the truck drivers finally took to him. Hiram also puts together other things to bring people in and help them pay off their bills. But at ever turn is that dreadful man that wants to bring them down and you know what? He just doesn't. He's no match for Melia and Hiram. One day things happen and Melia is putting together and new scheme and it all works out. I find it funny that she tells a boy that she's dating that they are going to get married and that's how it is. The characters are so full of spunk and I loved each one of them. Having relatives from the era that went through things made me think of the past and stories. The little family have a rich voice in the book. They are funny at times and serious at times. They do what they have to do and eek out a living with the love they have for each other.

I'm a big fan of Louis Bayard, but wasn't sure if I would like a Y/A oriented book. I am so glad I took a chance! It was a wonderful story and, as usual, his characters were very real to me. Bayard writes in a much different voice here, although I think that's true with most of his novels, and once again he captures the time frame and characters perfectly. I'm not going to recap the story, as other reviewers have already done a fine job of that, but if you are wondering if this is a book that adults would enjoy - yes, it most definitely is!! I anxiously await Mr. Bayard's next book, no matter which audience he writes it for.

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