Molly’s Cue
by Alison Acheson

Reviewed by Donna Gamache

Molly’s Cue is another excellent book for teens by BC writer Alison Acheson. Her previous teen book, Mud Girl, was a finalist for the Canadian Library Association’s Young Adult Book of the Year, and her new coming-of-age story might be destined for similar recognition. Molly’s Cue will be most enjoyed by younger teens, from about age 12 up.

The story begins with Molly Gumley and her friend Candace on their first day of high school. Though it’s a big school, Molly is excited about starting grade nine and is especially looking forward to drama classes with Ms. Tanaka. At the same time Molly is still grieving the loss of her grandmother who died about five months earlier. It was Grand who had always said she belonged on the stage. From the very first drama class, Molly’s dreams of a career in acting begin to blossom, while in contrast, Candace, who is interested in art, is disappointed in her art teacher and drops the subject almost right away.

Before long, though, Molly discovers that school life and life on the stage, and even Grand’s supposed stage life, aren’t what she had thought they would be. She develops a debilitating stage fright and feels unable to continue acting – but by then it’s too late to quit that subject without losing a credit. With support from her teacher and friends she struggles on, eventually deciding to try a new form of acting: puppetry and ventriloquism. But will she be able to perform that on stage?

Both girls are from fatherless families. Molly’s father died in a motorcycle accident when she was very young, while Candace’s father has never been in the picture. Molly’s Uncle Early lives nearby when he isn’t away working as a photographer, but he tends to disappear when problems arise. “Quit,” is his advice for Molly when her acting difficulty develops.
Candace is used to being the only child in a single-parent family but things are about to change, for her mother, Avery, is expecting a baby. Candace is angry and resentful that Avery is so secretive, not telling anyone who the father is. Molly begins to suspect it might be Uncle Early, but he’s not ready to accept responsibility or settle down.

Teen readers will empathize with the girls’ struggles at school and home, and their attempts to determine just what life might hold for them. Eventually Molly comes to realize that “There’s no going back. It’s different now. There’s only going ahead, whatever that means.” (133) There’s also some romance in the story – though that might become a problem, with both girls interested in the same boy.

Author Alison Acheson has decided to try a new way of promotion – a trailer on YouTube. It’s a pretty fantastic way to advertise a new book and teens might like to check it out.

Donna Firby Gamache is a writer/retired teacher from MacGregor, Manitoba. Her newest work is Sarah: A New Beginning, a novel for children, loosely based on the coming of her great-grandparents to Canada in 1891.

Buy Molly’s Cue at McNally Robinson Booksellers (click on the line below): http://www.mcnallyrobinson.com/product/isbn/9781550504309/bkm/true/alison-acheson-mollys-cue