SUSAN COOLIDGE

THE COMPLETE KATY CARR SERIES

Susan Coolidge

The Complete Katy Carr Series

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Logan Bremner

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Introduction

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This single-author collection presents the complete Katy Carr series by Susan Coolidge, bringing together the three foundational novels commonly known as the Katy Carr Trilogy—What Katy Did, What Katy Did at School, and What Katy Did Next—alongside the later companion novels, Clover and In the High Valley. It also includes the short story “Dr. Carr in ‘Curly Locks’,” and a concise biographical sketch of the author. The volume’s purpose is twofold: to provide a coherent reading of the full narrative arc surrounding Katy and her circle, and to furnish readers with reliable context for appreciating Coolidge’s contribution to classic juvenile fiction.

Susan Coolidge, the pen name of American writer Sarah Chauncey Woolsey, published widely for young readers in the later nineteenth century. Her work, grounded in domestic realism, balances moral reflection with a lightness of tone that helped establish a durable model for stories about girlhood and family life. The biographical section in this collection outlines the principal contours of her career, situating the Katy books within her broader output and within the growth of English-language children’s literature. Without speculation or embellishment, it supplies the essentials needed to understand the authorial perspective that shaped these narratives and their continuing reception.

The Katy Carr Trilogy traces the early development of its spirited protagonist. What Katy Did introduces Katy within a bustling household, where she learns to navigate responsibilities, friendships, and aspirations. What Katy Did

at School shifts the scene to an academic community, foregrounding companionship, routine, and character under everyday pressures. What Katy Did Next carries the heroine beyond the familiar, testing her sense of independence and judgment in wider social settings. Across these novels, Coolidge retains an intimate scale, favoring episodes and conversations that reveal temperament and growth, while avoiding sensational incident in favor of believable domestic and educational experience.

The sequels extend and diversify the series’ perspective. Clover focuses on Katy’s sister as a central consciousness, allowing the family chronicle to evolve while maintaining continuity of tone and values. In the High Valley introduces additional characters and a new environment, examining how loyalty and adaptability shape emerging adult lives. These later novels preserve the clarity and warmth of the earlier books but explore shifting responsibilities, widening circles of friendship, and questions of vocation. They further demonstrate Coolidge’s interest in the everyday textures of community, showing how modest choices and steady effort contribute to personal integrity without departing from an accessible narrative design.

The spin-off short story “Dr. Carr in ‘Curly Locks’” offers a compact portrait of the Carr family’s physician patriarch in a self-contained episode. In a few pages, Coolidge compresses the qualities that animate the series—kindliness, observational humor, and practical ethics—while granting attention to a figure often viewed from the periphery of the novels. The short story form lets her adjust pace and emphasis, highlighting decisive moments rather than extended development. As a companion piece, it enriches the larger panorama without requiring prior knowledge beyond the family relationships that underpin the series and the everyday circumstances of their lives.

Coolidge’s stylistic signature blends clear, unadorned prose with gently ironic observation and carefully shaped scenes. She favors dialogue that reveals temperament, narrative frames that respect a child’s-eye understanding, and plots built from ordinary trials that invite reflection rather than shock. Her pages are animated by sibling dynamics, schoolroom rituals, neighborly ties, and the steadying presence of responsible adults. The result is didactic in the best sense: instruction through example, buoyed by humor and affection. That balance—between moral purpose and narrative pleasure—has sustained the books’ readability and secured their place among enduring works of children’s fiction from the period.

The Katy Carr series continues to matter because it honors growth as a patient process, one shaped by care, curiosity, education, and community. Readers encounter credible challenges and recoveries, along with the satisfactions of competence and kindness. This edition gathers the novels, the related short story, and an informative biography to facilitate continuous reading and informed appreciation. Presented together, the works reveal a coherent vision of character formation that remains relevant across generations. Whether approached for the first time or revisited with long familiarity, they offer a steady reminder that everyday choices can accumulate into a life of purpose.

Historical Context

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Born in 1835 in Cleveland, Ohio, Sarah Chauncey Woolsey, known as Susan Coolidge, came of age in a prosperous New England milieu that prized piety, education, and civic service. During the U.S. Civil War (1861–1865) she served as a volunteer nurse, experiences that sharpened her interest in convalescence, medical authority, and domestic caregiving. After the war she joined Boston's literary networks and published children's fiction with Roberts Brothers, the firm that also issued Louisa May Alcott. The Katy Carr books began with What Katy Did (1872) and continued through the 1880s and 1890s, reflecting postbellum ideals while tracing girls' growth within family, school, travel, and frontier settings.

In the Reconstruction and Gilded Age decades, American juvenile literature shifted toward domestic realism and moral self-culture. Middle-class households embraced conduct narratives that blended amusement with instruction, often framed by Protestant sensibilities and the rhetoric of cheerful duty. Coolidge wrote into this flourishing market, where family reading aloud and lending libraries amplified a title's reach. Her work conversed implicitly with Alcott's Little Women (1868–1869) while softening reformist edges in favor of everyday discipline, kindness, and perseverance. British and American audiences alike welcomed such tones, enabling transatlantic editions and steady sales in the 1870s and 1880s, when notions of girlhood stressed character over ambition.

Coolidge's recurrent focus on accident, illness, and recovery reflected contemporaneous medical culture. Katy's spinal injury and years of constrained motion echo late nineteenth-century ideals of the 'cheerful invalid,' the spread of home nursing, and faith in the physician as moral as well as clinical guide. The period saw debates over the 'rest cure' and noninvasive regimens, the shadow of tuberculosis, and anxieties about girls' health amid schooling and fashion. Dr. Carr's authority registers growing professionalization in American medicine after the war, while the household sickroom dramatizes feminine competence. Readers recognized familiar routines of convalescence and improvement, lending the series credibility and affective power.

Expanding educational horizons for girls underpin What Katy Did at School. From the 1850s onward, New England female seminaries and academies multiplied, and new institutions like Vassar College (chartered 1861, opened 1865) symbolized advanced study for women. Boarding-school life brought codes of conduct, letter-writing discipline, and peer networks that shaped identity. Coolidge adapts the Anglo-American 'school story' to U.S. settings, replacing muscular heroics with intellectual diligence and social tact. Her portrayal reflects anxieties over propriety, chaperonage, and the value of literary societies, while acknowledging that education could widen horizons without unseating domestic obligations, a balance readers and guardians in the 1870s regarded as prudent.

What Katy Did Next draws on the era's expanding transatlantic travel. Steamship lines and rail connections in the 1870s–1880s enabled middle-class Americans to undertake a version of the Grand Tour, guided by Baedeker handbooks and evangelical caution about Continental manners. Coolidge channels Boston-to-Britain cultural

kinship, encounters with Anglican and Catholic observances, and the moral scrutiny applied to theater, fashion, and flirtation. Travel serves as education in cosmopolitan civility rather than rebellion. The narrative mirrors how respectable tourism promised refinement while testing judgment, situating Katy within a broader Anglo-American conversation about taste, charity, and the responsible use of leisure in an interconnected Atlantic world.

The sequels Clover and In the High Valley relocate the series to the Rocky Mountain West, registering post-1870s migration patterns. After the Denver and Rio Grande and other railways opened routes, Colorado marketed its dry climate as curative, attracting invalids and families seeking health. Towns like Colorado Springs (founded 1871) balanced resort gentility with proximity to mining and ranching economies. Coolidge's domestic lens surveys frontier sociability, household ingenuity, and reformist benevolence amid sparse institutions. The novels echo national debates about taming wilderness while preserving moral order, and they show women organizing community life as the West transitioned from transient camps to stable, middle-class settlements.

Coolidge's universe also circulated through the robust periodical culture of the late nineteenth century. Juvenile magazines such as St. Nicholas (launched 1873) cultivated serialized fiction, holiday numbers, and character spin-offs that linked stories across issues and volumes. A short piece like Dr. Carr in 'Curly Locks' exemplifies how recognizable figures could anchor miscellaneous tales for a loyal readership. Editors, engravers, and correspondence columns fostered a participatory reading public, while transatlantic reprints by firms including Ward, Lock & Co. expanded reach. Before the International Copyright Act (1891) stabilized some rights, overlapping American and British

markets helped make Katy a durable, widely shared cultural reference.

Contemporary reception praised Coolidge's warmth and decorum, fitting school prize lists and Sunday-school libraries, yet later critics probed the series' prescriptions. Twentieth-century scholars of girls' literature and disability noted how Katy's discipline through illness enshrines patience and self-regulation, aligning with Victorian ideals that could constrain female agency. Still, the books' New England schoolroom, Atlantic crossings, and Rocky Mountain households register central currents of U.S. life between Reconstruction and the 1890s. Their endurance owes to this social documentary value as much as to plot, offering a lightly moralized panorama of how a rising middle class imagined health, education, travel, and settlement in a rapidly changing nation.

Synopsis (Selection)

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Susan Coolidge(Biography)

A concise life sketch situates Susan Coolidge within domestic fiction for young readers, emphasizing her focus on everyday ethics, female education, and family life.

Across the Katy sequence, her signature warmth, gentle humor, and episodic realism underscore moral growth without harshness, while later volumes widen the social and geographic scope.

Katy Carr Trilogy

These three novels trace Katy Carr’s course from impetuous girlhood to reflective young womanhood through home adventures, a pivotal school year, and first travels.

With a bright, affectionate tone, they explore self-discipline, friendship, and emerging independence, using domestic episodes and letters to balance comic mishaps with quiet lessons.

Sequels

Clover and In the High Valley shift attention to Katy’s circle—especially her sister Clover—and carry the action from the familiar home front to a Western mountain community.

Retaining the series’ gentle, observant manner, they emphasize resilience, community ties, and courtship amid new landscapes, marking a move toward broader social horizons.

Spin-Off

This brief vignette featuring Dr. Carr presents a stand-alone encounter that highlights the series’ humane, quietly humorous view of everyday care.

It distills the motif of kindness-in-action into a compact scene, reinforcing the family ethos that anchors the larger novels.

The Complete Katy Carr Series

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SARAH CHAUNCEY WOOLSEY (Susan Coolidge) was born in Cleveland, Ohio, January 29, 1835. Her father, John M. Woolsey, a New Yorker, had come to Cleveland to attend to property owned by his father, and had there met Jane Andrews, a charming and graceful girl from Connecticut, whom he made his wife.

Their home was on Euclid Avenue, and comprised about five acres in house-lot, garden, orchard, pasture, and woodland. Here came into the world a family of four girls and a boy,—all vigorous and active and full of life. Sarah was the eldest and the predestined leader of the little tribe. They grew up as children of that day did under similar conditions. There was the regular old-fashioned schooling, not too exacting or strenuous, and much wholesome out-of-door life. There were horses and dogs and cattle and birds for the children to care for and play with, and much climbing and romping were permitted in a place where no near neighbors could be disturbed. To the other children life was a joyous holiday, diversified with small disappointments and dismays; but to Sarah the sky and the earth held boundless anticipations and intentions, and the world was a place of enchantment.

She was always individual from the moment she first opened her big brown eyes—passionately loving and passionately wilful, with heroic intentions and desires, and with remorse and disappointments in proportion. Part of the woodland where the axe had not yet done its work of cutting and clipping was given to the children for a playground. They called it “Paradise,” and for all of them it

was a place of rapture and mystery. To the others it was full of hiding places,—to little Sarah the hiding places were bowers. They looked for eggs and birds' nests, and had thrilling encounters with furry wild creatures, which fled at their approach; but her intercourse was all with the fairies and elves and gnomes which peopled the place. After a time they felt the presence of the fairies too; but it was under the influence of her enthusiastic imagination, which controlled their own more mundane perceptions. With her for a leader they often passed into a new world of romance and adventure and high undertakings. They lived in battlemented castles, attended by knights and squires, with danger on all sides met by lofty courage; or they rode on elephants in India, always on dignified missions, attended by great pomp and ceremony; or they lived with fairies, whose gifts might crop up under every toadstool. To be sure, the elephant on which they made their proud progress might at other times, stripped of his trappings, be serviceable as a nursery table, and the fairy gifts were apt to bear a prosaic resemblance to certain well-known and well-worn nursery properties; but invested with the mystery and romance cast upon them by Sarah's vivid imagination, the little band went, as she led them, into the land of dreams, and felt no incongruity.

Her education went on much as she chose. The best teachers available were employed, and to each in turn she became a favorite and interesting pupil; but though her quick intelligence enabled her to pass excellent examinations and gave her a foremost place in her classes, she really assimilated and retained only what she enjoyed. Mathematics she ignored entirely. All scientific problems fascinated her by their results; but she would not open her mind to the processes by which the results were reached.

For languages she had no predilections, though she used her own with singular grace and precision, drawing her words from an apparently limitless vocabulary. Through life this charming use of language, combined with her keen humor and sympathetic appreciation of all that makes life stirring and vital, made her a most fascinating companion. Her delight in literature was her real education. From her early youth she revelled in books, reading so rapidly that it seemed impossible that she could remember what she read; but, in fact, remembering it all! To have looked over a poem two or three times was enough to make it a permanent possession. She devoured history, biography, romances, and poetry, and with intuitive judgment and taste revelled in what was really beautiful and interesting, and discarded the second-rate and commonplace. She began writing at a very early age,—fairy stories, verses, and romances,—but she never published anything until she had reached full maturity. Meantime she grew to vigorous, active womanhood, full of interests and friendships and delightful experiences of one sort and another. She was much loved, and gave such a wealth of self-forgetting, idolizing, ardent affection in return that her friends were all lovers. She drew a circle of loving admirers about her wherever she went, and was always totally unconscious of the charm she worked by her very sweet voice and manner, brilliant fun, and warm sympathy.

The Civil War broke out just as she passed from girlhood to young womanhood. It aroused in her a passion of enthusiasm and devotion, and she threw herself with all her heart and soul into work for the soldiers at home and afield. In the Soldiers' Hospital at New Haven she was an enthusiastic helper, in the wards, or storeroom, or linen closet, wherever her energy was most needed. And her

leisure was filled with knitting or sewing or preparing special diet for the sick and wounded. She was a tireless worker then and ever, and nature had endowed her with great practical gifts. She was an excellent cook and an expert needlewoman, both in plain sewing and the most dainty embroidery, and all work was done with such rapidity and perfection that it was a despair for the race of plodders even to watch her swift achievements.

From New Haven she went to the Convalescent Hospital established at Portsmouth Grove, and was one of a band of excellent workers there during the second year of the war. It was a very developing and vivid experience, and one which she counted among the greatest points of interest in her life.

When the war was over, her old career of busy, never-slackening industry and purpose began again. It was full, as ever, of friendships which could not possibly claim more than she was willing to give. She naturally drew around her the cleverest men and women of her acquaintance, and her society was sought far and near.

But she did not really begin her life as an author until a few years later, when in a grove at Bethlehem, N. H., sitting on a fallen tree, she sketched the outline of “The New Year’s Bargain.” She had sent a few fugitive articles to certain magazines before this, but only now did she take up writing as a real work. That dainty little book, with its fantastic and graceful imaginings, was so well received by the public that she went on in a different vein, through the series of the “Katy Did” books, where fact and fiction, experience and fancy, were so blended that it was hardly possible to say in answer to the eager questionings of some of her little readers where the one ended and the other began. Katy found a large audience, and her biographer went on from

children’s books to verses or historical studies, such as “Old Convent Days,” or mere editor’s work, like the condensations of those famous old diaries of Mrs. Delany and Miss Burney. She was consulting reader for Roberts Company in the days when the hall-mark of that firm was a proof of excellence. She was very industrious, but her literary work never seemed the most absorbing part of her life. This was partly because of her intense and vivid interest in the rest of life,—the journeys, the visits, and above all the friends,—and largely because she was absolutely devoid of literary vanity or self-consciousness. She seldom talked of her work or referred in any way to her success. Her verses found a warm welcome in many hearts whose owners were all unknown to her, and sometimes she acknowledged, with a sort of tender surprise, that it was a great reward to have been able to help and encourage others. But anything like flattery or mere compliment was very distasteful to her, and she sometimes owned impatiently that “Susan Coolidge” bored her to death, and she wished she had never heard of her!

While literature became the chief occupation of her life, her artistic temperament and love of the beautiful found expression in many other ways. She instinctively surrounded herself with beautiful objects and colors. Her taste was almost unerring, and harmony of design and softly shaded tints seemed to be her natural setting. She transformed every room she lived in, were it for a week only.

She thought little of her drawings in water color. They were all flower pieces studied from life, and she was conscious of the little instruction she had received and her ignorance of technique. But all the same these lovely panels were a joy to those who were fortunate enough to possess them. As was once said by one who was no mean artist

himself, “She can do what many artists—adepts in technique—fail in. She gives us the flower in all its life and spirit.” Her china painting—necessarily more conventional—was still charming, holding something of her individuality.

This vivid life of purpose and energy and never-failing zest appeared to bubble up from such an inexhaustible fountain of vitality that it seemed as if it might go on for ever. But gradually a shadow stole over it—not a very dark one at first, but inexorable. She fought with it, played with it, defied it, but it was always there! She could not acknowledge defeat and was always planning for the future with gay self-confidence; but the shadow grew! By and by the narrowing limits shut her in her chamber, but even then she looked out upon the days to come with undaunted courage. The chamber was not like a sick room. It was bright with sunshine and the sparkle of fire, and scented and gay with the flowers she so dearly loved. Here she read and wrote and saw her many friends. From hence came words of rejoicing for all her dear ones who were happy, and words of truest sympathy for those who were sad. She was one of the few people to whom the joys and sorrows of others are of equal importance to their own. She pondered over the lives of her friends with never-ending interest, and gave at every turn and crisis the truest and most comprehending sympathy. No wonder that so many warmed hands and hearts by that generous flame!

Slowly the shadow deepened. She was disturbed by it, but still wrote happily of the future and filled it with plans and purposes. But one day, April 9, 1905, very gently, Death’s finger touched her. She was not conscious of pain or trouble, “only a new sensation,” but she closed her eyes, and without a word of farewell, was gone away from us.

It is hard to sum up such a life. It was a very full and happy one. She gave much, but received much. She loved beauty, and she was always surrounded by it. She loved friendship, and nobody had more or better friends. She gave them of her best, but she drew their best from them. Hers was an ideal companionship, so full of appreciative interest and sympathy, so illuminated by wit and humor. She was ardent and eager in her plans of life. Nothing could exceed the absorption and energy with which she carried them out. But she accepted disappointment, after a little struggle, with a gay *insouciance*. So when the final defeat came she seemed to resign herself without struggle to the inevitable, and to those of us who loved her best it seemed as if that sweet and brilliant and unwearied spirit had only folded its wings for a moment before taking a longer and surer flight.

E. D. W. G.

April, 1906.

Katy Carr Trilogy

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What Katy Did

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So in they marched, Katy and Cecy heading the procession, and Dorry, with his great trailing bunch of boughs, bringing up the rear.

TO FIVE

Six of us once, my darlings, played together
Beneath green boughs, which faded long ago,
Made merry in the golden summer weather,
Pelted each other with new-fallen snow.

Did the sun always shine? I can’t remember
A single cloud that dimmed the happy blue,–
A single lightning-bolt or peal of thunder,
To daunt our bright unfearing lives: can you?

We quarrelled often, but made peace as quickly,
Shed many tears, but laughed the while they fell,
Had our small woes, our childish bumps and bruises,
But Mother always “kissed and made them well.”

Is it long since? – It seems a moment only;
Yet here we are in bonnets and tail-coats,
Grave men of business, members of committees,
Our play-time ended: even Baby votes!

And star-eyed children, in whose innocent faces

Kindles the gladness which was once our own,
Crowd round our knees, with sweet and coaxing voices,
Asking for stories of that old-time home.

“Were *you* once little too?” they say, astonished;
“Did you too play? How funny! tell us how.”
Almost we start, forgetful for a moment;
Almost we answer, “We are little *now!* “

Dear friend and lover, whom To-day we christen,
Forgive such brief bewilderment, – thy true
And kindly hand we hold; we own thee fairest.
But ah! our yesterday was precious too.

So, darlings, take this little childish story,
In which some gleams of the old sunshine play,
And, as with careless hands you turn the pages,
Look back and smile, as here I smile to-day.

professional attentiveness steps into focus, portraying medical work as patient-centered and quietly communal. Susan Coolidge’s biography, including her Civil War sanitary work, lends historical resonance to this vision of service as disciplined, everyday labor rather than grand heroics. These elements establish duty as both affectionate and skilled, a practice requiring time, listening, and discretion, which then frames how younger characters understand their own responsibilities.

Within What Katy Did and What Katy Did at School, care migrates from parental oversight to peer networks. Household routines teach reliability; convalescence invites patience and gratitude; school life introduces mutual aid through shared tasks and confidences. The depiction of friendship emphasizes caretaking as reciprocal and often improvisational, with girls adjusting plans to accommodate one another’s strengths, limitations, and moods. Academic obligations coexist with a quieter curriculum of noticing others. Duty here becomes situational competence—remembering, fetching, organizing, accompanying—actions that nurture trust and prepare characters for more public forms of service.

What Katy Did Next and Clover expand care beyond kinship to hospitality and neighborliness, where strangers become temporary dependents or guides. Travel requires etiquette that is also ethical attention, balancing self-possession with responsiveness to local norms. In the High Valley amplifies this in a setting where climate, distance, and scarce resources make everyday help consequential, turning courtesy into sustenance. The frontier context reframes duty as cooperative survival, while preserving the series’ preference for tact over confrontation. Across locales, vocation and affection thread together, suggesting that

competence acquires meaning through its usefulness to a concrete community.

Question 4

Which historical shifts surface through schooling, tourism, and western settlement in the series?

Written in the decades after the American Civil War, What Katy Did presents a middle-class household negotiating recovery and aspiration in a culture that prized domestic stability. The emphasis on orderly routines, self-improvement, and gentle manners mirrors advice literature of the period while allowing room for youthful exuberance. Coolidge's own era, noted in her biography, complicates the portrait with firsthand acquaintance of national upheaval and nursing work. The result is a home that is protective yet porous, receptive to news, books, and visitors, and already oriented toward the broader currents of education and mobility.

What Katy Did at School reflects the late nineteenth century's growing investment in female education, from organized curricula to institutional life away from home. Hillsover's regulated calendar and public ceremonies hint at new pathways for girls to form identities within semi-formal organizations. Letters and visiting days reveal emerging infrastructures—railroads, postal reliability—that sustain separation without severing ties, indicating technological underpinnings for social change. The novel captures a transition in which domestic virtues are redeployed within communal settings, gesturing toward women's expanding participation in intellectual and civic spheres while keeping aspirations grounded in everyday sociability.

What Katy Did Next participates in the era’s transatlantic tourism, portraying steamship travel, sightseeing, and etiquette across borders as educational experiences. Clover and In the High Valley register contemporaneous western migration and health-seeking travel, attentive to altitude, climate, and the neighborly economies of sparse settlements. The works notice how transportation and communications technologies shrink distances while generating new codes of conduct. They also balance admiration for novelty with persistent American habits of practicality and informality. Through these settings, the series traces a map of modernizing life, where character growth is inseparable from mobility and regional encounter.

Memorable Quotes