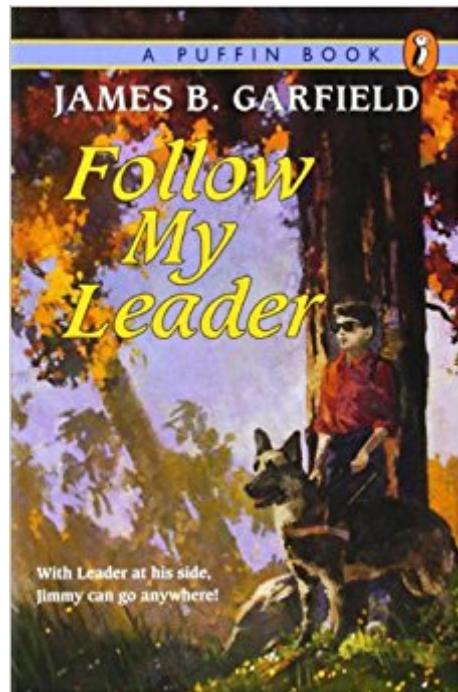


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# Follow My Leader



## **Synopsis**

A heartwarming story about a boy and his guide dog, for fans of *Where the Red Fern Grows* and *Because of Winn-Dixie*. After Jimmy is blinded in an accident with a firecracker, he has to relearn all the things he used to know - how to get dressed, how to find his way around the house, even how to eat. With the help of a determined therapist, he learns to read Braille and use a cane. Then he's given the chance to have a guide dog. Learning to work with Leader is not easy, but Jimmy tries harder than he ever has before. Can Leader really give him the ability and the confidence he needs?

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Puffin Books; Reprint edition (December 1, 1994)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140364854

ISBN-13: 978-0140364859

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.5 x 7.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 162 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #114,106 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #34 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Special Needs

## **Customer Reviews**

James B. Garfield, like his protagonist Jimmy, lost his eyesight in his late fifties and was forced to adapt. At sixty, he acquired the first of his guide dogs and worked in an aircraft plant and was instrumental in the creation of the State Board of Guide Dogs for the Blind.

OK, I remembered every detail from this book because my fourth grade teacher read it to the class, little bits, every day. This was in 1960! It was part of our social studies program. One of our classmates had an older brother who was blind and he came in and gave a presentation to the class. He didn't have a guide dog, but used a cane. He showed us his special watch, with the face that popped open so he could feel the face and tell time. This must have made an impression on my 9-year-old self, because all these years later, I wanted to read the book again. Keep in mind, this book was written in 1957, so it reflects that time period. Great book for kids. When my grandson is old enough, I will certainly read it to him!

My sister and I loved FOLLOW MY LEADER as kids and were so happy to share it with our own kids and, as a literature enrichment provider, our customers' kids - but we were mystified about the absence of info about its author. However, through his granddaughter's post here, we were privileged to connect with the family and get all kinds of great info and photos to share about this amazing man. We've written a biographical article about him we'd love to share with you. James B. Garfield, it turns out, was far more than "just" the author of this fabulous book. In his 102 years - more than half of them lived in blindness -- he served the blind in a huge variety of high-impact ways, including in an official capacity under three California governors. In fact, his work led to the laws allowing guide dogs in restaurants, planes, etc. But he did so much more -- you'll be amazed, not just at his vast number of accomplishments, but that you'd never heard about him! Truly an unsung (so far) hero. Help spread the word -- he deserves the recognition, and his daughter Carolyn (yes, the Carolyn in the book) and granddaughter Amy Lazarus are happy to see him honored. You can read the article and get tons of free resources for this book on the LitWits Workshops website: <http://www.litwitsworkshops.com/free-resources/follow-my-leader/>. Enjoy!

This book was read to me the first time by my 4th grade teacher (back in the 1960's). It's about a blind boy, and so many of the issues he dealt with back then are so similar to stereotypes of our society today. Some positive reinforcement of what we should be working toward today. Directly following the noon lunch, she would read from this book to the class for about 15 minutes. I found my 4th grade teacher on FACEBOOK about two years ago, made contact, and told her a little about the book and then asked if she could remember the title. She saved me in the 1960's and made a rebound and helped me find the book. Yes, She did remember the title. "Thank You Mrs. L"

I have wanted to read "Follow My Leader" for more than 40 years. Or, more precisely, I've wanted to \*finish\* reading it. I read the first chapter as a 10- or 12-year old, in the family dentist's waiting room. I remember the protagonist's mother fretting that her boy was "entering a long dark corridor" after he was blinded when a firecracker exploded in his face. Then the hygienist called me in, and I never got to finish the book. Fast forward to 2011, and now in middle age I get a scare when told that I may have a genetic condition that leaves its sufferers blind. I find I want to learn as much as I can about blindness, and along with scientific research papers and memoirs of blindness written by and for adults, "Follow My Leader" comes back to mind. I bought a copy on , and decades later I finished the book I started as a kid. And the good news is that it's a pretty good book! Yes, it was written in

the 1950s, and reflects the speech, technology, and social mores of its time. Yes, it's written for teens and tweens, so the dialogue, character development, and plot are simple and unchallenging. But it remains an affecting story of a boy's adaptation to blindness. The response he evokes from sighted strangers continues to ring true to the experience of blind people today. The author manages to educate his readers and raise their consciousness about blindness and blind people without hitting them over the head with a moralistic cudgel. As an aside, the "long dark corridor" phrase recurs a few times in "Follow My Leader." Calling Dr. Freud! I'd love to read a post-modern critic's take on a prepubescent (i.e., asexual) boy's entering a long dark tunnel, in a life where he's dominated by women (his widowed mother, [sighted] little sister, social worker, and teachers) and the men tend to be dead like Dad, blind, or superego/authority figures (like doctors, scoutmasters, and school administrators). Is disability emasculation, losing his eyeballs a metaphor for castration? Jimmy's triumphant emergence -- his assertion of manhood -- occurs in the chastely masculine contexts of his schoolboy classmates and fellow Boy Scouts. It's a minor curiosity that the author, James Garfield, shares his name with one U.S. President, while his protagonist, Jimmy Carter, shares his with another! You will enjoy "Follow My Leader." It's a triumph-over-adversity story that presents a sympathetic character in a reasonably true-to-life style. Children and younger adolescents will enjoy the narrative, and adults will appreciate the intimations of Jimmy's subjective experience. ----Postscript: After further evaluation, it seems that I do not have the genetic condition after all. Much to my relief, Jimmy's successes notwithstanding! Post-postscript: Don't take the Freudian paragraph too seriously; I don't.

This is a book or better yet, THE book that cemented my love for reading and writing to this day. I started reading very early and never stopped. I thank the author for sinking the hook deep. I've bought many copies over the years, loaned or gave them out, hoping to catch a new reader. If you have this book, please share it with a young reader. It's a gift for life if they, like myself and many others, fall in love with reading. That's a true gift that never goes out of style.

My 4th grade teacher read this to our class. I also joined the weekly reader book club and bought it to read more times. It was just as good as an adult as it was 60 years ago! Timeless!

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