

The Natural History of Us

Rachel Harris

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"Dang" and "y'all" are right at home in this realistic YA fiction with a healthy dose of Southern charm.

Baseball meets barrel racing in *The Natural History of Us*, a second-chance romance from Rachel Harris. Living life to the fullest and facing fears head-on got Peyton's cowgirl heart broken as a freshman, and now, as senior year draws to a close, the heartbreaker himself, Justin Carter, baseball star and star flirt, is determined to win her back.

Set in the Lone Star State, where *dang* and *y'all* are at home right next to *for realz* and *hella fun*, Texas teens Peyton and Justin couldn't be more different, but both are hiding something from the ones that know them best. Peyton Williams is a sunny optimist and a Guillain-Barré Syndrome survivor who loves rodeo, has a literary crush on Gilbert Blythe, and works hard on her family's ranch, while rich boy Justin hides behind his player reputation, all but abandoned by his absent father and disinterested stepmother.

Chapters alternate between Peyton's and Justin's points of view, and jump back and forth between the initial freshman romance and current senior-year circumstances. The result is a mix of lighthearted flirtations and the thrill of a first love mingled with fears of failure and betrayal, and learning to believe in yourself as these two deal with some serious emotional baggage. Strong family bonds and themes of love, trust, and acceptance are prominent against the colorful backdrop of Peyton's charmingly chaotic home life, complete with an animal hotel and a pet-grooming business and a best friend running a rodeo fashion vlog.

Justin claims that his love for Peyton seems inevitable, and although a minor love triangle emerges in the form of Peyton's longtime friend and ranch hand, Cade, this good-girl/bad-boy match-up seems inevitable as well. Family values and traditions mix with high drama at high school; throw in a zany senior project complete with digital babies and a horse named Annie Oakley, and fans of realistic YA fiction with a healthy dose of Southern charm will laugh, cry, and fall in love with Peyton and Justin in *The Natural History of Us*.

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