Ruby Lee & Me
by Shannon Hitchcock

This might be the worst summer of 12-year-old Sarah Beth Willis’s entire life. She blames herself for her little sister Robin’s tragic accident, and the mounting medical bills force her family to sell their house in town and move to a small farmhouse in the country. Thankfully, Sarah’s loving grandparents are there, and Ruby Lee, her best friend, lives nearby. But this hot southern summer of 1969 is bringing even more changes.

While the Vietnam War continues to rage, the impending integration of local schools is causing a lot of fear and discord in the small community. Robin is still in and out of the hospital, and gossip about Mrs. Smyre, a new sixth-grade teacher and the first and only African-American educator in the area, is spreading like wildfire. When Sarah makes a racist remark to Ruby Lee, both girls wonder if their friendship can ever be repaired. Perhaps the calm and sensible voice of Mrs. Smyre can heal more than a broken friendship.