8-2015

Awake

Maggie Mason Smith
Clemson University, mason5@clemson.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://tigerprints.clemson.edu/lib_pubs
Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
Please use publisher's recommended citation. http://www.slj.com/tag/ya-reviews/

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the University Libraries at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact awesole@clemson.edu.
This book breathlessly captures that she knew. And overshadowing it all are the making her doubt everything she thought but there is a new student teacher who is talking more seriously about their future, her small Alaska town. Her boyfriend is miles away from everything she knows in university, but it would take her thousands of

Most teens, but Clara has extra challenges in which she will go to extreme lengths to protect. As Julia, now called Lucy, realizes her to escape the whispers and outright hate after shooting himself, remains in a coma, and kills 11 people in the band room. Ryan, twin brother, Ryan, brings a gun to school the latest author to tackle

While it’s not

An exploration of the adolescent moment of being torn between an old life and the possibility of the new as well as romance and the dangers and exhilarations of physical contact. There is a persistent thread of Mormon faith throughout the book, but Perry integrates it with a light touch that reads as integral to the characterizations rather than an attempt at evangelizing. The characters are well developed and engaging, occasionally falling into familiar tropes (the forbidden older lover being one), but are well drawn and likable enough to overcome that. While the Alaskan setting is true to life, even that pales compared to the authentic, dynamically portrayed interior setting: a senior year in high school and all the transitions that entails. What at first glance appears to be a romance novel featuring a stock girl character with two love interests is revealed to be much more multilayered coming-of-age tale about finding one’s own way in the world.

VERDICT Teens who identify as Latter Day Saints will certainly gravitate to this novel, though the rich writing, strong female protagonist, and faith message will help it find wider readership.—Elizabeth Nicolai, Anchorage Public Library, AK


Gr 9 Up—Pierson packs AIDS, abortion, suicide and more in her message-heavy 1989 romance. Quinn and Seth have different viewpoints on most things, as evidenced by their heated classroom debates. They’ve met their match in each other, and a mature and respectable first love story follows—all though the plot is secondary to the setting. The author’s passion for the period is clear. The narrative is built around the events of the decade, instead of starting with a compelling story and then setting it in a specific time frame. Instead of dwelling deeply into a few issues, numerous big themes are only touched upon at a surface level. Stylistically, Pierson makes curious choices as to what details she provides in the story line and pacing and which ones are left out. Quinn’s pregnancy reveal and the internal conflict that ensues on whether she should have an abortion is given short shrift while a sex scene with Seth garners pages of excruciating detail. Also, Quinn’s breakup with her best friend seems rather abrupt. Politics, not the personal, drives the story. Pierson’s novel reads like a primer on the 80s through the eyes of likable, although unmemorable, characters. VERDICT An exploration of the recent past with uneven pacing and ill-defined characters.—Laura Falli, McNeil High School, Humble, TX


Gr 8 Up—Scarlett Garner has a gap in her memory. She can’t remember anything before her fourth birthday and because she always develops a headache when she tries, she is starting to accept that her memories are likely lost for good. When Scarlett meets Noah, the new guy at school, she falls hard and fast; Noah is just as smitten as she and quickly begins helping Scarlett work toward regaining her memory. But when Scarlett is in a car accident and starts to have flashbacks, she isn’t sure that she wants to remember after all. Fortunately, Noah is the very definition of emotional support. Unfortunately, his motives may not be as pure as they seem. Although centered on Scarlett, if it weren’t for the love interest, the novel’s interesting but far-fetched plot—can anyone really remember their first four years?—would fall completely flat. Noah dictates the pace of the work and Noah creates and sustains the mood; readers quickly learn that he isn’t as he seems and as each chapter reveals just a little more of who Noah really is, readers will find themselves questioning every minute he spends with his would-be victim. Although the progression of Scarlett’s relationship with Noah is unrealistic and the thoughts of both characters are repetitive at times, Noah’s internal crisis and ultimate decision will keep readers intrigued. VERDICT An engaging but flawed thriller.—Maggie Mason Smith, Clemson University R. M. Cooper Library, South Carolina