

Darius The Great Is Not Okay

By Author, Adib Khorram

Reviewed by: Shrayaa Jayapal, 15

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

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Darius, a young tea-loving, nerdy, half-Iranian boy who lives in Portland, Oregon visits his family in Iran for the first time. He finds a hard time fitting into his family, as he doesn't speak Farsi, the language his Iranian family uses. Darius also struggles with depression, like his father, and finds it difficult to manage at times. He made a friend in Iran named Sohrab who makes him feel validated and special. This story is about how he connects with his family, both his Iranian and American sides.

Darius the Great Is Not Okay, was an outstanding read! I thought all the characters were extremely realistic and developed nicely throughout the book. I loved how accurately the book portrays people suffering from mental illness like depression and shows that getting better or managing it isn't a linear path. The hardships of explaining his illness to his Iranian family was also very realistically portrayed, as there still is a stigma of mental illness around the world, whether internalized or externalized. Additionally, the struggles he had with his identity were also a huge part of the novel, when he feels too Iranian at school but not Iranian enough in Iran. His friend Sohrab though, made him feel like himself, he was *always* Iranian enough for him and there was no need to pretend he was okay all the time. Around Sohrab, he felt comfortable. I also enjoyed how Darius' relationship with his father develops over the course of the story.

This novel was both humorous at times and serious and I appreciated the balance. I enjoyed the comical nature of the narration that kept the book interesting. I would recommend this book to anyone 13 and older as there are some mild mature scenes and profanities and since Darius is a teenager, it would be easier for the reader to relate to him if they were around his age but many adults were found to enjoy it too. This book is a great gift to give and can also be borrowed from the library. For the most part, personally I thought it was really refreshing to be reading a book with a narrator/protagonist I could relate to and it was fascinating to see him grow as a person. This book left a positive message that it's okay to admit that you're not okay and it won't make you any less of a person or weaker in any way.

Recommended Titles:

Born a Crime by Trevor Noah

Darius the Great Deserves Better by Adib Khorram

This is Kind of An Epic Love Story by Kacen Callender