

Eleanor and Park

Rainbow Rowell

Reviewed by: Audrey Soohoo, Age 19

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

www.bethestaryouare.org

Eleanor and Park is a coming of age story about Eleanor Douglas, the new girl at school, and Park Sheridan, an outcast who would rather spend time reading comic books than participating in social activities. When the latter notices Eleanor being bullied on her first day, he offers her a seat on the school bus next to him, where their friendship begins. Bonding over a shared love of music and other forms of media, the two become close and soon develop a close relationship, to the surprise of those around them. Though many obstacles, such as family, societal expectations and pressures, and doubt threaten to tear them apart, Eleanor and Park manage to stay true to themselves and to each other throughout it all.

I really enjoyed reading this book and found it to be very captivating, even though the setting only shifted between three places. It seemed that once I began, I couldn't stop reading it because I was always wondering what would happen next in the world of Eleanor and Park. However, despite the lovable relationship that the two grow to have as the novel progresses, I think it's important to address the problematic elements of it as well. The story takes place in Omaha, Nebraska in the 1980's, a time in which racism was still extremely prominent in society. Park, being half Korean, has to handle being picked on throughout the novel because of his ethnicity, and it seems as though the author has made it out to be the focus-point of who he is. I would've liked to see more character development in all of the characters, but especially Park, who harbours internalized racism due to the environment he has grown up in. I think Rainbow Rowell could have approached this subject in a different manner, making it seem less as though all of Park's problems are due to being an Asian American. The book takes said issue very lightly and only examines it on the surface, something that bothered me frequently. A beautiful love story could have been written without demeaning Park's heritage and family.

I would recommend this book to the age group of 15+ because it handles dark themes such as abuse, alcohol consumption, bullying, body image, discrimination, and prejudice, which may require an older audience to grasp. I believe this is a one-time read because other than their blooming relationship, there is not much to remember about it. I'd say going to a local library would be the best option in acquiring it.

Recommended Titles:

Fangirl, Rainbow Rowell

Looking for Alaska, John Green

The Sun Is Also a Star, Nicola Yoon