

Mosquitoland

David Arnold

Reviewed by: Rina Guo, 16

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Mary Iris Malone, but more commonly known as “Mim”, runs away from home. Or at least the place that her father and step-mother call “home”, hundreds of miles away from Cleveland where Mim and her father used to live with her birth mother before her parents divorced. After many confictions with her parents and their suspicious secrecy regarding the health conditions of her real mother, Mim can’t take it any longer and she catches the closest bus bound north to look for her mother, make sure she’s okay and live the rest of her life with her, the way everything was supposed to be like before her family fell apart. On her little adventure, she meets other traveling souls and strangers, some of whom become her friends, and others that become her enemies. Overall, her little journey is sweet, funny and heartbreaking all the same, as Mim navigates the world amidst the broken memories she can’t move on from, in the past.

This book is suitable for readers 14-18. This is a young adult novel within the genre of Realistic Fiction. There is some strong language and some sexual harassment.

This was a wonderful novel. I really love Mim’s personality and her voice and character really shines through, beautifully, in her thoughts and dialogue. I love David Arnold’s use of flashbacks, memories, as well as occasional letter-but-more-like-personal-diary-like-entries that Mim has, to make sense of her current situation as well as the unresolved conflicts of her past. Mim’s little road trip becomes something so much more, as she explores her personal growth, her dreams, as well as developing new friendships and empathizing with the struggles of others. Mim has a kind of free-spirited, impulsive but also witty way of speaking. I really admire how David Arnold made her a bit spunky, confident and informal. The plotline seemed to move in various directions on a whim from here and there, based on Mim’s impulsive decisions, but I think this is what gave the storyline such a flavorful and refreshing taste. In the end, everything leading up to the climax seemed more deeper, meaningful and almost destined to happen. I loved the growth and shift in Mim’s character, as she realized and learned new things. Although a lot of her interactions and experiences with other minor characters seem humorous and amusing, underlying everything, you can feel a bit of Mim’s sadness and loneliness that accompanies Mim through her adventure. This bit of emptiness seems to be filled up gradually as Mim makes her way closer and closer to her destination and goal of finding her mother. But toward the end, when she finally meets her mother, everything leading up to the moment doesn’t seem to prepare her for what she finds. Overall, Mim’s journey helps her grow to accept her life and its imperfections, and she learns to come to terms with her fears and insecurities.

I love little adventure books, especially those that delve into different time frames of the present and past. The journey can really change the character and shape their perspective of the world in a new way. Despite having a goal and destination for her travels, Mim seems to be lost in her life overall. Somehow though, through her deliberate act of diverging from the path, she seems to regain footing and understanding of her life and identity in the end.

Recommended Titles:

Savvy by Ingrid Law

Walk Two Moons by Sharon Creech

An Abundance of Katherines by John Green
Let's Get Lost by Adi Alsaid
Unpregnant by Jenni Hendriks and Ted Caplan