

Dry

Neal Shusterman and Jarrod Shusterman

Reviewed by: Ananya Ganesh, 16

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

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Alyssa Morrow and her brother Garrett live in California with their parents and uncle Basil. When the ‘Tap Out’—the crisis in California where the residents can no longer get drinking water from taps—hits, the five-person household needs to act quick. Alyssa had the idea to stock up on ice, which people hadn’t been thinking of at the time as they rushed to buy the last case of water at the local Costco. At home, however, Garrett accidentally dropped bleach into their water supply. Alyssa’s parents, as a last resort, decided to go to the beach and collect desalinated sea water, a journey from which they don’t return, prompting Alyssa and her brother to venture out to a dystopian California that they couldn’t recognize.

I loved reading this book. I think this was an interesting way to emphasize the ongoing water crisis, particularly in California where droughts are common. The plot was very creative and disturbingly, somewhat easy to relate to. We all have an experience, particularly in these unprecedented times, where we’ve gathered materials for an indefinite lockdown. While the people of California weren’t locked in, they did go through a sort of similar situation with the tap out. I also liked the way Shusterman and Shusterman slowly changed the way they described scenery over the course of the novel when to set the mood of the story. It was a clever trick and subtle, and it made the dystopia scary, yet beautiful in a way. The way they described these scenes, particularly when Alyssa, Garrett, and Kelton first visit the beach where the desalination machines were set up. It really encourages the readers to look at how true colors come out in times of crisis. As we continuously diminish our limited stock of drinking water, this book could also be used to raise awareness or foreshadow a coming crisis.

I would recommend this book for anyone who is a fan of dystopian novels or environmental science. Anyone aged 14 and up can understand and appreciate everything that happens in the novel. It would also make a great gift to anyone interested in climate change and environmental problems, as well as any fans of the classic novel Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury.

Recommended Titles

Scythe – Neal Shusterman

Unwind – Neal Shusterman

Plague Land – Alex Scarrow

Fahrenheit 451 – Ray Bradbury

The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy – Douglas Adams