

Umbrella Summer

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Reviewed by Rachel Johnson, 42

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10-year-old Annie is worried about anything that could cause her harm. She has been this way since her 11-year-old brother Jared died from a rare disease a few months earlier. Everything has changed, her parents act different, people give her weird looks and she cannot bring herself to have any fun. She wears full bike gear while walking her bike, she is concerned about how food is prepared, and she wears band aids when she has no scrape or cut. Annie's friends want her to join in fun activities, but she refuses because they could be dangerous. Annie's new interest is reading a book about preventing illnesses. Everyone tells Annie she should not worry so much but it does not help.

Mrs. Finch moves into the house across the street and her and Annie become friends. The two of them begin having tea and playing cards. The more they talk they begin to understand each other's grief. Annie learns that Mrs. Finch lost her husband recently and is having trouble unpacking some of his things. Mrs. Finch learns that Annie is so worried about death that she is missing out on being a kid. Mrs. Finch tells Annie she will miss the sun if she keeps living under an umbrella. Will Annie be able to close her umbrella so she can enjoy being a kid again?

Umbrella Summer is an emotional story about losing a loved one. Grief affects everyone differently and the author did a terrific job portraying that. Although this is a sad story it is light and fun at the same time. Its upbeat and moves at a fast pace. The characters are realistic with unique personalities. I enjoyed reading about the growth of the main character throughout the story. I loved the sense of community and how the neighbors seemed to genuinely care for one another. The friendships between young and old are a nice touch. I did not like the disconnect on the part of Annie's parents, but that changed in the end. Overall, this is a fantastic story with a beautiful ending. Conversations about death, grief and forgiveness could arise. I would recommend it to reader's age 10+, if you see it at the library pick it up.

Recommended Titles

Right at Rain, by Lindsey Stoddard

Red White and Whole, by Rajani Larocca

A Single Shard, by Linda Sue Park