

Saving Sky

Diane Stanley

Reviewed by: Andres Fernandez, 17

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

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Recommended for age: 9-13

Sky Brightman, a bright seventh grade gal living in Pecos, New Mexico, is forced to consider her opinion of right and wrong when a series of terrorist strikes cause out-lash towards foreigners in a not-so-distant future. She lives with her family in a 60 acre ranch they have a distinct lifestyle that makes them stand out around town. They live autonomously, without television, internet or electricity, and despite having jobs in town, her parents, her sister and herself devote their time to tending horses, maintaining the ranch and keeping an unconventional spiritual lifestyle, speaking positive thoughts at dinner time, celebrating the solstices and looking at the moon. During the time of the novel, a series of attacks on the energy infrastructure of the country provokes problems in the supply of food, electricity and commodities, causing the frightened citizens to lash out towards outsiders. Chaos ensues, with the fictional president issues a law permitting the arrest and internment of persons from certain backgrounds and Sky, through her innate sense of justice and open communication with her parents, realizes that the scenario will cause problems to her middle-eastern classmate Kareem (who she had noticed being bullied and mocked by her classmates). Kareem's father, a colleague of Sky's mother, is seized, and Sky, along with her mother, develops a plan to take Kareem out of school and hide him at their home once they realize that Kareem is going to be seized too.

Living with the Brightman's, Kareem is introduced to their quirky lifestyle, and at first is reluctant to accept it, but as time goes on and the political situation gets worse, he begins to warm up to the. Sky's family do all they can to help him feel comfortable, and even build a hiding space in the stables once the government agents begin to search for him. The quiet boy begins to embrace the slightly odd lifestyle and opens up about his family. The story climaxes after a few months, when the government agents return and see Kareem standing in the open. Using the horses, Sky, her sister and Kareem flee into a snowstorm and in a hidden Pueblo cave, Kareem and Sky realize that they cannot hide, and that the agents will wait for them. They ride back. The story then jumps months forward, where Sky, who is a very talented writer, is receiving a prize for an essay writing contest. Instead of reading her essay, Sky reads Kareem's diary, which she found at her house after he was seized. Through his moving words about discrimination and profiling, and pictures that he drew of his family, she pleads with her audience to speak out against the actions of the government, citing her family as an example of the power of good intentions. She describes the situation openly, telling people how the boy, her age is being held in a deportation facility and of the punishment her family endured.

The book proposed an interesting premise, with moral questions definitely relevant to the modern day. Sky is a good character, although the instances of her thinking to herself to be more positive and hopeful are a bit excessive. The family's spirituality is a very good contrast in establishing Sky as a different student from the norm, which in turn justifies her reaction towards the incidents happening around her. However, the instances of happy reactions and marvelling, ranging from looking at the snow to relaxing after Kareem escapes, are a bit overdone, and I think that the story could have done with less of those. The characters of Mouse and Gerald the bully are slightly flat, sticking to conventions, with the sister being a typical, jumpy eight year old and the bully having a embarrassing back story. One thing that I did like was the attitudes of Kareem, whose plight was very believable, including his quietness and the dilemma between staying in a safe place but having to live with very odd people and Sky's father as a character; he was willing to help Kareem honestly, and used his skills

in a realistic manner. The way he treated his two daughters, combining a respect for them as persons with a strict upholding of his own life philosophy made him a very pleasing character.

This book suffers from having very complex subject matter, but having to adapt it to a young teen reading level and simplify the information about terrorism, power outages and crisis will be familiar to most readers, but the inability to go into detail about the deportation centers, the government attitudes and the collective identity of the discriminated people makes the novel much more about Sky's journey through kindness, which could have been done without the charged background. There was also an instance in chapter 7 where the angry, resented man screaming at the Arab customers was portrayed with a specific stereotype, which was not necessary to the scene, which gave the message well enough with the crowd of customers reacting aggressively towards the Arabic people. Overall, I would recommend the book, but advise care when reading into the political situation and the . It might be a good book to buy and read with children as an introduction to the issues that plague our world today, especially as some of the things, like the paranoia and discrimination can certainly emerge with children at schools that repeat what their parents say. The message of help and kindness is very valuable, especially since it shows how even a seventh grade girl can have a voice when she notices injustice. The lifestyle of her family might be familiar to readers in the southwest US and an interesting window to readers outside of the region.

Recommended Readings:

Copper Canyon Conspiracy by Carolyn Keene

Among The Free by Margaret P Haddix

Lily's Crossing by Patricia Giff

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Reviewed By :Tauhid Jackson, 16

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Saving Sky Review

America's future was known to have a widespread amount of terrorist attacks. Since America had predicted they would be plagued by terrorist attacks it caused Americans to live with fear, limitations in their daily life and lots of scary reports. A girl named Sky and her family learned to live without involving themselves with society. No television, internet and another reason why they did it was so they could stay safe from the scary outside world. The family ended up unlucky and the war hit close to their home along with an innocent boy being targeted by the government. The government had targeted him because they were arresting all Middle Eastern men and boys and putting them in detention centers. Sky agreed upon hiding Kareem with her family but a bully from her school ends up getting suspicious and she knows she can't hide him forever.

I don't usually read a book from a third person's main character. But the book was very well written and made it really clear that the author really wanted us to care for Sky and what was going on in her life. I thought it was interesting that they used Sky's parents name s instead of the usual mom and dad. They had their own personalities and its different from most books for a young age level. Their relationship with Sky is also intriguing, Instead of disrespecting her parents she is very well mannered and respectful towards them and they seem to get along well.

I though there was an excellent sense of character development and everyone seemed very well balanced. Sky is a true and real character and the idea of terrorist attacks like in this book is very realistic and the same situation they went through could easy occur any day. Saving sky is a good book for kids in elementary school but the whole terrorist part was a little much.