

## **Drama**

Raina Telgemeier

Reviewed by: Ella Gohari, 12 years old

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

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Drama by Raina Telgemeier is a graphic novel starring Callie, a middle school theater lover who works with her school's theater production crew. During the course of the novel, we see her struggling through common teen troubles, like developing a crush on a friend, including other people, and of course, a ton of drama. The author also did the drawings, and they are clean, colorful, and immersive. While there may not be as many words as a novel, this graphic novel is a definite must read for any middle schooler who feels a little left out, because at the end of the day, we are all equals, and this story really reinforces the theme.

Another thing I really like about Drama is that it tackles LGBT+ issues. From the start, one of the main characters, Justin, says that he is gay, and the author does not make a big deal out of it. Being gay is just one part of who he is as a person, and he is far from the "stereotypical gay best friend" that many books have, in fact, his sexuality barely makes an appearance in the book. It symbolizes the fact that times are changing and that it is okay to be gay without it being a giant part of how you act and are treated. On the other hand, there is another character who I will not reveal that also has their coming out arc. While Justin is carefree and okay with his sexuality, this other character has more trouble with accepting themselves, which makes for a fiery conclusion.

As I read this novel, I felt that Raina Telgemeier really was able to step into a middle schooler's mind set. As a middle schooler myself, I felt that this story was relatable, because just like Callie, all of us have those awkward moments that we would just like to forget about. We also have to deal with accepting ourselves for who we are, and it can be a hard time for all of us. Finally, this book also tackled the meaning of friendship and inclusion. In middle school, friendships are made and broken, and this book shows it. By making friends with twins Justin and Jesse, Callie shows that you can be friends with the opposite gender without it being a romantic relationship, and by continuing to stick by her best friend Liz, Callie shows that some friendships can last a lifetime no matter what drama comes their way. Another thing I love about this book is that the boys in the story are not portrayed as macho, strong men who only care about sports and hot girls. Both Jesse and a character named Matt have to deal with the stereotype that boys are not supposed to like theater, and in the beginning, they believe it. As the story progresses; however, they start to feel more comfortable with their masculinity.

In my opinion, this would make for a great gift for both boys and girls around Callie's age, which is 13-14. It is a quick read, but a good one, and I definitely recommend! If you liked this book, you should try reading anything else by Raina Telgemeier, such as Smile, Sisters, and Ghosts.