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### Olive's Ocean

Elizabeth Meyers

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Henkes, Kevin. *Olive's Ocean*. Greenwillow Books, 2003. ISBN 0060535431. \$16.89. 217 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Meyers

Reading Level: Intermediate; Young adult;

Rating: Outstanding;

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Grandmothers--Juvenile fiction; Family life--Juvenile fiction; Self-perception--Juvenile fiction; Books--Review;

Martha Boyle never thought much about Olive Barstow, even after finding out Olive had been killed in a car accident. Oh, there was the initial shock, but nothing afterwards. Then, a page from Olive's journal (delivered by her mother) reveals the same secret hopes and dreams Martha has, along with the knowledge that Olive thought Martha Boyle was the nicest girl in her class. Deeply affected by the coincidences and unable to talk about her feelings, Martha sets off with her family to spend a few weeks with her grandmother on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. As Martha struggles through family ups and downs, the pangs of first love, and a close brush with death herself, her connection to Olive grows deeper, and she rediscovers all the beautiful things life has to offer.

*Olive's Ocean* is as deeply moving and layered as the sea. Detailing on the most superficial level an account of a girl spending the summer with her family, the novel braves the deeper (as well as universal) story of Martha's efforts to cope with the problem of mortality. Young readers, especially those who have experienced the death of a friend or acquaintance, will find this novel helpful and insightful.