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Together Apart

Elizabeth Meyers

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Gray, Dianne E.. *Together Apart*. Illustrated by NA. Houghton Mifflin, 2002. ISBN 0618187219. \$16.00. 193 pp.

Reviewer: Elizabeth Meyers

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Sex role--Juvenile fiction; Blizzards--Juvenile fiction; Grief--Juvenile fiction;

Ever since the blizzard struck that killed her two brothers in the January of 1888, Hannah has been holding in a mixture of shame and grief, hardly helped by her father's new distance from her. Hannah feels horrible for having weathered the blizzard separated from her brothers, who died after the roof of their small country school collapsed. She survived by spending the time buried in a haystack with Isaac Bradshaw, a poor young man who happened to be out on the prairie at the same time as Hannah. They did nothing shameful, but Hannah's father has forbidden her to have any dealings with him. When both start to work for an eccentric widow in town, and Isaac is accused by his stepfather of having stolen tools from him, Hannah and Isaac must work to keep his whereabouts secret even as their own understanding of themselves, and their feelings for each other, begin to emerge.

Dianne Gray's new novel is a fascinating portrayal of two young people who, having shared a traumatic experience, struggle to identify their new places in and feelings about the world. The book is well-written throughout; the account of Hannah writing a play to work through her feelings is especially moving. While this book should be head for a variety of reasons, (historical information, empowerment of characters, and so on), the real draw will be the realistic, beautifully expanding relationships that Gray renders so skillfully.