



2005

Bird

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Johnson, Angela. *Bird*. Dial, 2004. ISBN 0803728476. \$15.99. 144 pp.

Reviewer: Lara M. Ackerman

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction; Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Runaways--Juvenile fiction; Stepfathers--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Bird, a thirteen-year old girl from Cleveland, runs away from the wreckage her stepfather left when he walked out on her family without saying goodbye. From Ohio, she makes her way to the tiny town of Acorn, Alabama. There she lives by hiding out in a shed behind the home of a family whose faces she remembers from her stepfather's photographs. She knows he will come eventually, and when he does she will be waiting.

Ethan, living in the house with a shed out back, is struggling to adapt to life with a new heart and new prospects in life. He has a way of seeing what other people do not see and soon begins leaving food where he knows Bird will find it. Their tentative friendship opens the way to understanding themselves and the world better. Jay, a boy living in town, is still struggling with the death of his younger brother Derek. He can't bring himself to forgive the family--or the boy--who are the grateful recipients of Derek's heart. After encountering Bird on a roadside he feels an instant connection to this lonely girl who might understand what it feels like to lose someone.

Spare and sincere, the story is told through the interconnecting narratives of three voices. In each chapter we see the inner thoughts of these characters as they move, expand and occasionally overlap, bringing surprising and comforting results. Johnson, three-time winner of the Coretta Scott King Award, skillfully uses words and emotions to unfold this delicate novel. Although the conclusion is very open-ended, many valuable truths about human emotion and interaction are brought forward for consideration and examination.