



2006

Stay with Me

Sarah Wanlass

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Freymann-Weyr, Garret. *Stay with Me*. Houghton Mifflin, 2006. ISBN 0618605711. \$16.00. 320 p.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Shortcomings

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Sisters--Juvenile fiction; Suicide--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Leila Abranel, the central character in *Stay with Me*, is a sixteen-year-old girl trying to sort out her feelings about life, love, and family. Her beloved half-sister Rebecca commits suicide, and Leila yearns to discover why she took her own life. Leila's parents leave the country to spend a year working at a hospital in Poland as a way to avoid grief. Leila is left with her other half-sister, Clare, a successful business woman with a difficult love life.

Leila's story is a series of episodes and experiences told from her present tense point of view. She reflects on her family: her sister's eating disorders and emotional problems, her workaholic parents, the "great loves" she has seen and heard about. She explores her feelings regarding her former boyfriend Ben and her growing interest in her new friend Eamon, who, though much older than herself, seems to understand her and returns her interest. All the while Leila experiences the struggles of work and school, where dyslexia hinders her achievement.

Though it is admirable that Freymann-Weyr is not afraid to tackle difficult subjects, at times, the story seems contrived. Blending the issues of suicide, forbidden love, family problems, eating disorders, emotional disorders, and learning disabilities, all at once, is a bit overambitious.