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The Gospel According to Larry

Jan Staheli

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Tashjian, Janet. *The Gospel According to Larry*. Henry Holt and Co., 2001. ISBN 0805063781. \$16.95. 227 p.

Reviewer: Jan Staheli

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Young Adult Fiction;

Subject: Web sites--Juvenile fiction; Fame--Juvenile fiction; Identity--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Josh Swensen, who is *not* your typical 17-year-old, is a high school student with a mission ...well, maybe a two-fold mission. He wants to tell his best friend he's been in love with her since sixth grade, and he wants to change the world. So he starts a blog. He calls it, "The Gospel According to Larry" and regularly rants about consumerism, and advertising companies, and anything else that is bothering him at the time.

"I've written a lot about the crap we fill our lives with--possessions that tie us down, that only distract us from who we are trying to become. But what about the people we surround ourselves with? Are they people who ignite our passions, who spur us to greater self-mastery?...The people we choose to spend our lives with are the people who share our journey--are you surrounded by crewmates or pirates who hijack your time?"

As he fails to make progress with Beth and truth-telling, he begins to make some differences with his blog, until he finds himself faced with a life-changing decision and can see only one way to solve his problem.

Channeling the spirit of a very intelligent teen-aged boy seems easy, as Janet Tashjian makes this story of growth, idealism and angst feel real and urgent. Josh's reasoning makes sense, and the path down which Tashjian leads readers feels logical, inevitable and alarming. There are many thoughtful young people who have similar concerns, who question the world's values and who want to make a difference. Strongly recommended for such people, and the adults who care about them.

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