



2009

Donut Days

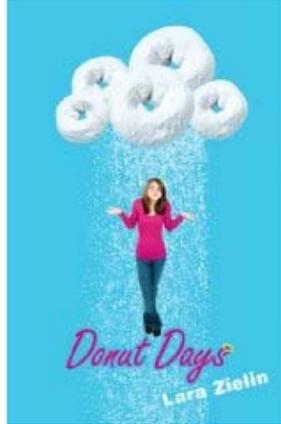
Megan Harris

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Zielin, Lara. *Donut Days*. Penguin Group, 2009. ISBN 9780399250668. \$16.99. 256 p.

Reviewer: Megan Harris

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Faith--Fiction; Clergy--Fiction; Friendship--Fiction; Books--Reviews;

Emma's baptism is interrupted by the richest member of the congregation, Mr. O'Conner, who claims to have a message from God. His message, that women should not preach, has huge consequences for Emma, because the pastors are her parents and because Emma is in love with Mr. O'Conner's son. Emma's best friends then turn on her in favor of Mr. O'Conner's daughter, Molly. Communication breaks down further in Emma's home when Emma refuses to attend a religious university, but prefers a secular one. When her parents refuse to fund her college dreams, Emma decides to enter a journalism contest requiring her to camp out at the opening of a popular donut shop. While there, she meets a reformed biker gang whose members help her to understand the true nature of religious repentance. After getting framed by Molly for theft in the camp, Emma is sent to jail on the eve of her mother's removal as co-pastor. Emma's old friends reveal Molly's plot and release her from jail. Mr. O'Connor's son brings forth evidence of his father's plot to take over the pastor-ship for monetary gain. After awakening to the importance of freedom and religious interpretation, Emma's parents allow her to apply to a secular school.

Zielin's debut novel approaches many dark themes with a lightness provided by approachable characters and unique settings. Young adult readers may relate to Emma's feelings of isolation and awkwardness as she attempts to navigate the adult world springing up around her. *Donut Days* is an excellent novel for teens struggling with religious, social, and parental issues.

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