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Friend Is Not a Verb

Debbie Barr

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Ehrenhaft, Daniel. *Friend Is Not a Verb*. HarperCollins, 2010. ISBN 9780061131066. \$16.99. 241 p.

Reviewer: Debbie Barr.

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Fiction; Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Rock groups--Juvenile fiction; brothers and sisters--Juvenile fiction; Fugitives from justice--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

When Hen Birnbaum's sister, Sarah, returns after a yearlong absence no one will explain to him why she disappeared, he teams up with his friend Emma to figure out what happened himself. Hen tries to deal with his issues by playing the bass in a "90s nostalgic band." He tries to find answers with Sarah's friend Gabriel under the guise of bass lessons, but even after stealing a copy of Gabriel's memoir, things still don't add up. In the meantime, Hen begins to dream of being a rock star and tries to get his band off the ground. In the end Sarah reveals that she and Gabriel had stolen money from his father and had to hide out of the country until things were smoothed over. Hen no longer holds resentment for his sister, and realizes that while she is gone he has come to a better understanding of himself.

While the story has humor and strong characterization, the plot has a tendency to be slow and unrealistic. The book was at its best when concentrating on Hen's rockstar dreams and at its worst when focusing on Gabriel's memoir and the mystery behind Sarah's disappearance. The two plots didn't work well together and may leave readers confused or bored. However, the voice and inclusion of current media forms like Facebook may make this a good contemporary book for teenage boys, especially in a market that's flooded with teen girl stories.

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