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The Last Best Days of Summer

Meriam Bates

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Hobbs, Valerie. *The Last Best Days of Summer*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010. ISBN 9780374346706. \$16.99. 208 p.

Reviewer: Meriam Bates

Reading level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fiction; Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Coming of age--Juvenile fiction; Grandmothers--Juvenile fiction; Down syndrome--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Lucy Crandall's summer is promising to be fantastic. She and her best friend Megan are determined to be ready for anything 7th grade can throw at them, and both spend their time compiling a list of "Ten Top Tips for How to Be Popular." Lucy is also looking forward to spending the normal last two weeks of summer with Grams at her cabin in California where she can talk to Grams about anything. This seems extra important this summer as Lucy struggles both with Megan's popularity obsession and the friendship of Eddie, a boy with Down syndrome. But things seem to start falling apart as Lucy struggles with Gram's increasing forgetfulness, as well as a surprise visit from Eddie. Lucy finds that nobody has all the answers, but through Grams' example, Lucy finds the courage from her last summer alone with Grams to tackle her problems and come out on top.

The Last Best Days of Summer tackles some of the most difficult problems that normal teenagers face as they leave the world of childhood behind. Lucy struggles with the difficulty of befriending a boy with Down syndrome, moving in a different direction from a childhood friend, and learning of her grandmother's descent into dementia. The writing is straightforward without unnecessary description or detail, allowing the reader to concentrate on the storyline and grow with Lucy as she finds how to deal with life. This heartfelt story will appeal to any teenager, especially girls, as they make the same journey.

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