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Hour of the Bees

Jess Verzello

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Book Review

Title: Hour of the Bees

Author: Lindsay Eagar

Reviewer: Jess Verzello

Publisher: Candlewick Press

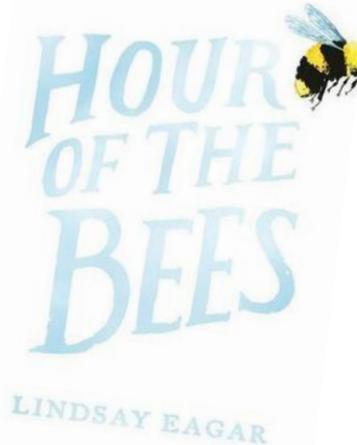
Publication Year: 2016

ISBN: 9780763679224

Number of Pages: 360

Interest Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding



Review

There might be nothing worse for a twelve-year-old city girl than to be forced to spend an entire summer in the hot, boring New Mexico desert taking care of a grandfather she's never met. Carolina, who goes by Carol, dreads helping her family pack up the dying sheep ranch and move her dementia-riddled Grandpa Serge into an assisted living facility. But Carol and Serge begin to form a connection as he recounts her Mexican-American heritage and the life that once occupied the barren desert. Carol finds herself desperate to solve the mysteries of the bees, the lake, and the people from Serge's stories that seem too fantastical to be real. By summer's end, Carol (Caro-lee-na as Serge calls her) finds herself desperate to save the ranch and her heritage connected to it.

Hour of the Bees is a great introduction to magical realism as Eagar weaves reality and fantasy together in this celebration of Mexican-American heritage. This book could be used in a scholastic setting for growing cultural awareness and diversity in young readers. Thematically, the story focuses on the importance of familial love, personal sacrifice, and cherishing culture. The main character's journey also communicates the message of appreciating where you come from and being aware of the negative effects that urbanization has on personal individuality and identity. Even though Carol is young, she experiences great personal growth by spending time with and caring for her grandfather. While there are some gaps in various character developments, overall *Hour of the Bees* is an outstanding work that raises familial and cultural awareness.