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Cold War on Maplewood Street

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Book Review

Title: Cold War on Maplewood Street

Author: Gayle Rosengren

Reviewer: Leah Christopher

Publisher: G. P. Putnam's Sons

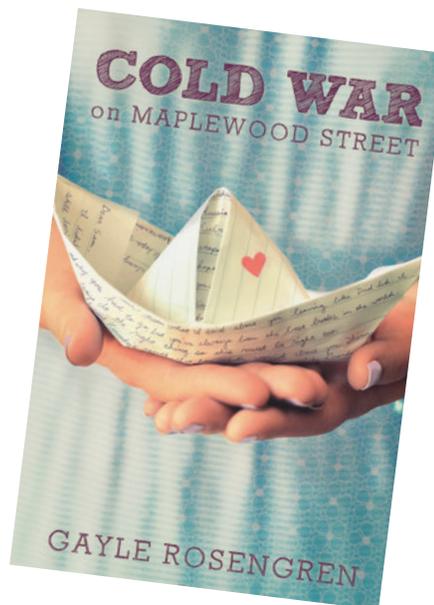
Publication Year: 2015

ISBN: 9780399171833

Number of Pages: 180

Interest Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent



Review

Among the everyday struggles of an eleven-year-old, the TV announcement of President John F. Kennedy interrupts: Russia is threatening nuclear war. As the Cuban Missile Crisis unfolds and panic spreads rapidly through Joanna's community, Joanna also faces conflicts closer to home: resenting her older brother for leaving her to enlist in the navy, feeling lonely as her single mother works all day, hoping for the attention of a cute boy, avoiding her scary elderly neighbor, and discovering her friend's family problems. By the end of the week, the whole country breathes a sigh of relief as peaceful negotiations between leaders call off the war, and Joanna has chosen to forgive, to trust, and to empathize with others.

Readers should not expect the book to chronicle the whole Cold War—Rosengren's novel covers only the week in 1962 of the Cuban Missile Crisis. However, readers fully experience the threats and fears of that week through historically accurate events covered in newspaper, radio, and TV announcements. Thoughtful details paint a picture of the culture of the era, too—penny loafers, "The Monster Mash" song, home economics class, food stamps, and so forth. A strength of the story is Joanna's character, who embodies fears and interests common to pre-teens. *Cold War on Maplewood Street* surprises readers with its balance of scary and reassuring, happy and sad—but its short time period can make some plot twists seem drastic and some problems too easily resolved.

*Contains mild sexual content including a subplot of a marital affair.