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Say What You Will

Aylea Stephens

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Title: Say What You Will  
Author: Cammie McGovern  
Reviewer: Aylea Stephens  
Publisher: HarperTeen  
Publication Year: 2014  
ISBN: 9780062271105  
Number of Pages: 343  
Interest Level: Young Adult  
Rating: Significant Shortcomings

Review

Amy can’t walk without a walker, talk without the help of a machine, or control her facial expressions and some of her body moments. Matthew has obsessive compulsive disorder that he can’t admit and controls his life. They are put together when Amy decides she wants to make real friends and convinces her mom to hire student aides to help her during her senior year of high school. Having these student aids allows her to try to make friends for the first time, but she soon realizes that she wants to be more than just friends with Matthew. Both have to put their physical and mental issues aside, learn to communicate, and look past the mistakes they both make when they are trying to figure out who they are and want they want to be.

For most of the story, the character’s relationships and dealing with their physical and mental problems was interesting to read. Reading about someone with cerebral palsy and what goes on in their head even when they can’t communicate allows readers to understand these kinds of physical difficulties better. Matthew’s OCD was also interesting, but Amy’s tests for how to “fix” Matthew minimizes how difficult OCD can be. Until the last part of the book, the message was that Amy can’t help her issues but Matthew just needed to figure things out. Amy tends to be self-obsessed through much of the book. When Matthew is the only person who tries to help Amy, she decides that she’s going to stop talking to him, insult him, and cheat on him. The book talks about complicated issues, like medication, going to college, having friends that aren’t good for you, controlling parents, drinking, and sex. It tries to tell too many messages at once, leaving readers confused about what the overall message is supposed to be. The ending in particular confuses some of the earlier messages when Amy decides to make choices that seem completely out of character and potentially destructive. In many ways, Say What You Will is a story about two people with huge challenges learning to love each other in spite of those problems, but it also misses the mark in many areas.

*Contains underage drinking, strong language, mild sexual content that results in a pregnancy.