



2017

# The Sound of Life and Everything

Jarrett Bell

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### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Bell, Jarrett (2017) "The Sound of Life and Everything," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 38 : Iss. 8 , Article 17.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol38/iss8/17>

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# Book Review

**Title:** The Sound of Life and Everything

**Author:** Krista Van Dolzer

**Reviewer:** Jarrett Bell

**Publisher:** The Penguin Group

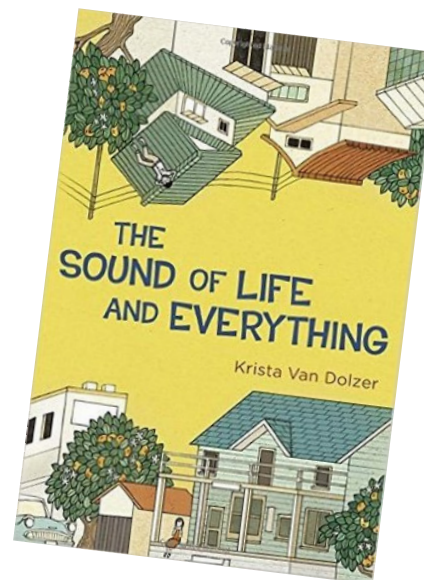
**Publication Year:** 2015

**ISBN:** 9780399167751

**Number of Pages:** 264

**Interest Level:** Intermediate, Young Adult

**Rating:** Outstanding



## Review

Ella Mae and her family live in a fictional town of California in post-World War II. In this science fiction story line, Ella Mae's rambunctious, grieving aunt gives the dog tags of Ella Mae's late cousin, Robby, to a new group of scientists who have cracked the genetic code and are able to reconstitute a body from blood samples. There is only one problem: The grown body that comes out of the reconstruction chamber has dark hair, double eyelids, and olive skin—he is a young Japanese man (who they call Takuma). When Aunt Mildred is repulsed by "the abomination," Ella Mae, her family, and her Californian community must deal with the prejudices they have as they house him. However, they soon learn that Takuma has more in common with Robby than they thought.

The Sound of Life and Everything is a unique genre mix of historical fiction and science fiction. This is a breath of fresh air from the dystopian and superhero subgenres of many science fiction novels today. Van Dolzer researched well as she includes an author's note about the scientists who discovered the double helix and the implications of DNA manipulation. The book has heavy themes of racism, taboo interracial love, and death in war, but because the story is told from the perspective of a young girl, middle age readers will connect with it well as it asks this question of the reader: "What if this had been my family?" The Sound of Life and Everything was voted on several 2016 Newbery nomination lists and appropriately so; in my opinion, it is certainly Newbery material. Krista Van Dolzer is also a BYU Alumna.