



On the Free

Melissa Heaton

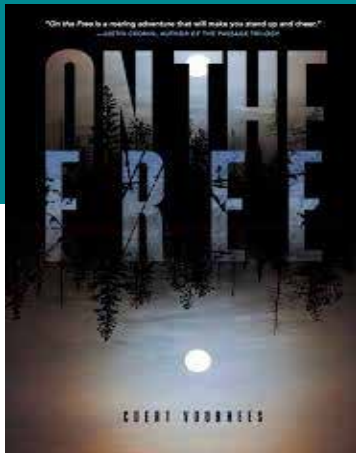
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Book Review

On the Free

Author

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Illustrator

Reviewer

Melissa Heaton

Rating

Significant Shortcom-

Level

Young Adult

Pages

271

Year

2017

Publisher

Carolrhoda Lab

ISBN

544818091

Santi, Victor, and Amelia—the only survivors left of the Bear Canyon Wilderness Therapy Program—are stranded in the Colorado wilderness after a destructive mudslide destroys their camp in the middle of the night and sweeps away the other members of their group. Santi and Amelia want to go back down the mountain, but Victor has other motives and wants to continue moving forward. As they try to find help, they endure injuries, harsh weather, a lack of supplies, vicious wildlife, and their troubled pasts. After the climax of fighting off a mountain lion, the fate of Santi, Victor, and Amelia are left open to reader interpretation.

On the Free has an intense survival plot, but it's constantly interrupted with flashbacks, repetition, and different viewpoints, which makes it challenging to keep details straight. The interruptions do help with character development, but the choppy subplots don't always compliment the main plot very well. The dominant theme is survival—not just surviving in the wilderness, but learning how to endure and rise above the harsh realities of life. Unfortunately, the novel is peppered with unnecessary, vulgar language and sexual content that could be too graphic for readers. This novel might appeal to some teens interested in survival books.

*Contains severe language and severe sexual content.