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Sink or Swim: A Novel of World War II

Tessa McMillan

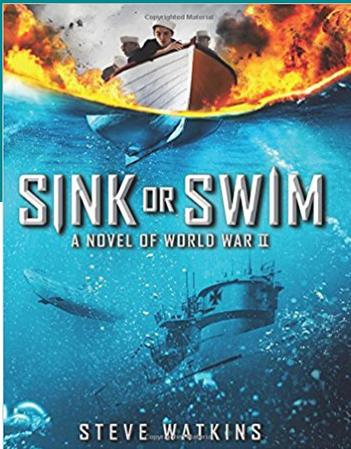
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Book Review

Sink or Swim:

Author

Steve Watkins

Illustrator

NA

Reviewer

Tessa McMillan

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

277

Year

2017

Publisher

Scholastic Press

ISBN

9781338057904

Twelve-year-old Colton Graham admires his older brother, Danny. Danny enlisted in the Navy soon after Pearl Harbor. But before Danny leaves for boot camp, he is seriously injured in a boating accident. Colton takes Danny's enlistment papers and identity. Soon Colton is experiencing the rigors of boot camp. He is assigned on a patrol craft spotting any U-boats stalking cargo ships in the Atlantic. During one mission, his patrol craft is torpedoed, killing half the crew and injuring Colton's leg. With only one lifeboat, he and his comrades aimlessly drift along for days until help finally arrives. Back on land, Colton is taken to the hospital, but his secret is out about being underage. Colton is discharged from Naval service and returns home to his mother and a healthier Danny.

Sink or Swim is a gripping novel loosely based on the true story of Calvin Graham. It is very apparent that Watkins did extensive research to authentically showcase what many WWII sailors experienced. Because of Watkins' thorough research, he can spend quality time developing Colton's character. Colton starts off as an insecure tween, but when desperate times call for desperate measures, Colton rises to the challenge to provide for and protect his family. However, Colton has moments where he just wants to be a kid and stop facing the horrors of war. So it comes as a relief when Colton's true age is revealed and he's discharged from the Navy. He can return to being a teenager, but he has the discipline of his experiences to confidently navigate his future. This is a fantastic historical fiction story for ages twelve and up.

*Contains mild violence.