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The Last Leaves Falling

Lisi Merkley

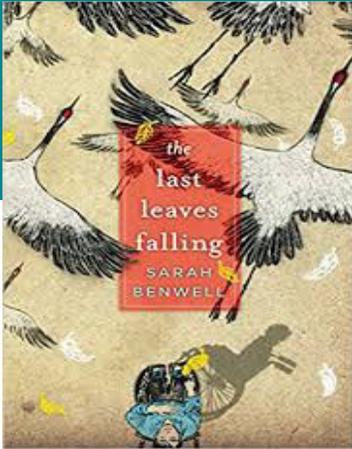
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Book Review

The Last Leaves Falling

Author

Sarah Benwell

Illustrator

Reviewer

Lisi Merkley

Rating

Dependable

Level

Young Adult

Pages

384

Year

2016

Publisher

Simon & Schuster Books

ISBN

9781481430661

Sora, a teenager in Japan, wants to be a professor when he grows up, but he knows that he never will. He'll never grow up, that is. Sora has ALS, and he knows the disease will take over his life, destroy his body, and eventually kill him. When he becomes confined to a wheelchair and his school can't accommodate him any longer, Sora loses all his friends and doesn't see a purpose to his life. On a whim, he joins an online chat group and makes two fast friends. Even with these two new friends, Sora struggles with the idea of just waiting for ALS to kill him and starts pondering ways to die on his terms like the samurai of the past.

Last Leaves Falling is a powerful book that deals with the controversial topic of suicide. Throughout the book, Sora contemplates dying on his own terms and thinks he comes to the correct conclusion. When he finally decides he doesn't want to die because of ALS, he enlists his friends to help, which after all the character building throughout the book doesn't feel like the right decision. Sora and his mother have a very tender, close relationship, and his decision to not consult his mother about how to die doesn't fit with the rest of the book. Obviously he is very close with his friends, but realistically friends that have only known each other for a few weeks wouldn't be committed enough to assist in suicide, no matter how sick someone is. The story flaws aside, Last Leaves Falling offers an interesting view into the life of a teenager dealing with terminal illness and leaves the reader wanting to live their life more fully.

*Contains mild language and moderate violence.