



2018

The Stars at Oktober Bend

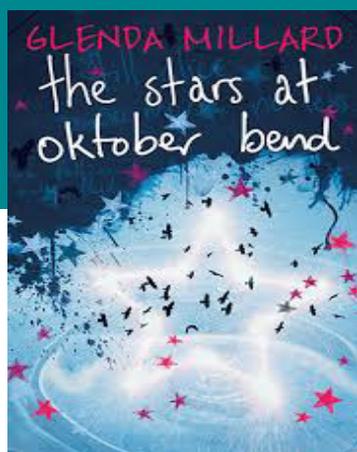
Meagan Andrus

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Andrus, Meagan (2018) "The Stars at Oktober Bend," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 39 : Iss. 5 , Article 92.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol39/iss5/92>

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Book Review

The Stars at Oktober Bend

Author

Glenda Millard

Illustrator

Reviewer

Meagan Andrus

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Young Adult

Pages

266

Year

2016

Publisher

Candlewick Press

ISBN

9780763692728

Alice is fifteen and is broken. When she was twelve, she was raped and attacked by two men and saved by her family members just in time. In a blind rage, her grandfather took his gun and killed them both. Ever since then, Alice has been unable to speak properly. Instead, she writes her words and leaves them in bus shelters, on noticeboards, on fences. One day, Manny James finds one of her poems and memorizes its lovely words. Manny is broken, too. He saw the murder and rape of his mother and sister and was forced into becoming a child soldier in his home country of Sierra Leone. Now he's in a small town in Australia, and trying to forget about his past. When Manny and Alice find each other, they learn that while they are both broken, they are not useless or and less beautiful for it. They find comfort and solace in words both written and spoken and in silence.

This book is both beautifully written and well executed. It is told through both Alice's and Manny's perspectives—Manny tells his story in a straightforward manner and Alice tells her through a combination of prose and verse. The themes explored are relevant and tough, with the characters coming to terms with prejudice because of heritage and socioeconomic status, forgiveness after experiencing unspeakable horrors, and the love that is created between two people who just want to be loved and understood. Readers will cheer for Alice as she finds her voice, muddled though it may be, and for Manny as he exhibits unflinching bravery again and again. Fans of beautiful language and beautiful stories will be entranced and uplifted by Millard's expert storycraft, with teens and adults wincing sympathetically at the characters' challenges and reveling in the characters' triumphs.

*Contains mild language, moderate sexual content, and moderate violence.