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Far From the Tree

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Grace, Maya, and Joaquin are three teenagers living independent lives. But when events in Grace’s life prompt her to start looking for her birth mother and possible birth siblings, she finds Maya and then Joaquin and breaks the news that the three of them have the same biological mother. Though the three siblings came this far in their life without knowing one another, they soon create strong family bonds and re-discover what it means to be a sister or a brother. The three are in a unique position: they will always be biologically related, but they have the opportunity to choose whether to stay in each other’s lives. As each of them faces their own unique battles, they are able to lean on one another for support and find that, sometimes, the family you choose is just as meaningful as the family that is chosen for you.

Far From the Tree provides an excellent look at the ways that nurture and nature affect an individual. Though three people could have similar beginnings, the twists and turns that their lives take from there could land them in completely different life situations. Grace, Maya, and Joaquin have totally different struggles, so a wide variety of readers could find something in the stories of the characters that they could relate to. Topics covered include foster care, alcoholism, teen pregnancy, bullying, gay acceptance, and many others. The book is told from shifting perspectives between each of the siblings, and author Robin Benway writes in such a way that each sibling has a slightly different way of speaking and viewing the world, which reflects their differing upbringings. Far From the Tree is an excellent addition to any young adult library. In its pages, everyone can find something to learn.

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