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If You Don't Have Anything Nice to Say

Meagan Andrus

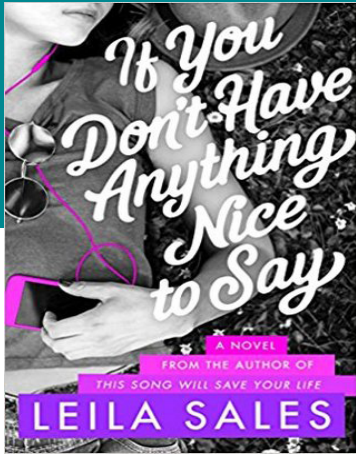
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Book Review

If You Don't Have Anything Nice to Say

Winter Halperin is a relatively normal girl with some eccentricities—she won the National Spelling Bee as a child, and her mother is a famous parenting expert. But one night Winter says something online that could be taken as offensive, and her words spread over the Internet rapidly. She is shamed online and in person for being a racist and a horrible person. Winter knows she's not a bad person, but this doesn't stop her from thinking of herself as a monster and becoming afraid of ever sharing her words again. As a last resort, she goes to a rehabilitation clinic for people who have been publicly shamed and disgraced, hoping to get something of her old life back. What she finds is that there's always two sides to a story, people aren't as black and white as they seem, and it is possible to move on from trauma.

This book has a lot of really good messages about online anonymity and its connection to public shaming, flame comments, and cyber bullying. The author also does a great job of using many examples to show her readers that most people are not completely good or completely bad, and that everyone makes mistakes and a select few get their mistakes put on public display. Unfortunately, these interesting issues and questions raised are jumbled up with a choppy story line, stilted side plots, and bad characterization. Winter is sympathetic one moment and insufferable the next, and her characterization is not consistent throughout the book. All side characters are altered to fit wherever the author wants them to go and are merely plot devices. The ending is drawn out and therefore not very satisfying. While this book is not terribly entertaining or well-written, it does have some very good commentary on relevant issues today and forces readers to consider the part they play in contributing to a hostile online environment.

*Contains moderate language and mild sexual content.

Author

Leila Sales

Illustrator

Reviewer

Meagan Andrus

Rating

Dependable

Level

Young Adult

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324

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