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Outrun the Moon

Emma Patton

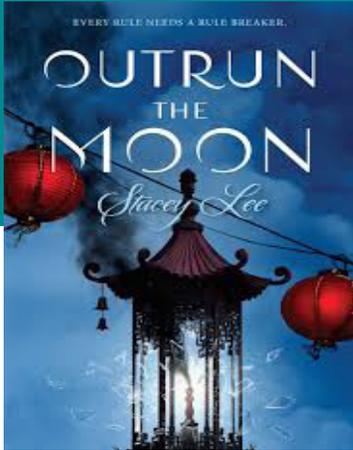
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Book Review

Outrun the Moon

Author

Stacey Lee

Illustrator

Reviewer

Emma Patton

Rating

Dependable

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

416

Year

2017

Publisher

G.P. Putnam's Sons

ISBN

9780147516916

Mercy Wong is an aspiring businesswoman, but she knows her upbringing in San Francisco's Chinatown will hold her back unless she can escape. After all, it's 1906, and, as the daughter of Chinese immigrants, Mercy is limited in how much she can achieve. To gain more opportunities, Mercy sets her sights on attending St. Clare's School for Girls. The prestigious school only accepts the white and wealthy, but Mercy uses her negotiation skills to obtain a space in the school. The only problem is that she has to lie about her true identity to the other girls. If they knew the truth of her background, they would reject and shun her even more. Just as she starts to make friends and see the possibilities in her future, an earthquake hits the city, destroying the school and her beloved Chinatown. Buildings and social conventions crumble. Mercy and her classmates turn to one another as each of them copes with their grief and survives their new reality in a ruined city.

Outrun the Moon lacks certain realistic elements that would make it a reliable piece of historical fiction. For example, the book mentions the separation between groups of immigrants and the rejection that different ethnic groups experienced in 1906. However, in the story, these issues are "solved" by just getting the groups to spend time together. This simplified portrayal of the ethnic divisions in the early twentieth century trivializes the severity of those issues. Also, the characters experience the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake, which kills the family members and destroys the homes of several characters. But the grief and trauma that accompanies this tragedy is portrayed as something that can be overcome with friendship and a positive attitude. The girls cry and sulk, but the homelessness and loss of lives is more of a fun adventure to the girls than a catastrophe. For this reason, the book loses credibility. Though it is an entertaining read, the characters and their reactions to the events are two-dimensional, and it is difficult to become immersed in the story because of those shortcomings.