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Fig

Emma Patton

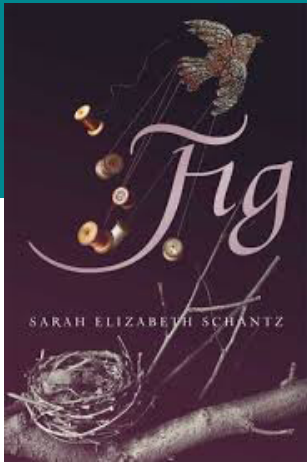
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Book Review

Fig

Author

Sarah Elizabeth Schantz

Illustrator

Reviewer

Emma Patton

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

336

Year

2015

Publisher

Margaret K. McElderry

ISBN

9781481423588

Bad things happen at age nineteen. That's when Fig's mom got schizophrenia, and it might happen to Fig too. So, no matter how old she is, Fig finds herself constantly counting down to that eventual age and wonders how things are going to be different then. As her mother's mental illness worsens, Fig's father becomes more and more frustrated with his own inability to save her. But Fig only feels responsibility and a sense of purpose at the thought that, if she does everything right, she might be able to set right whatever is wrong with her mother. Fig develops a series of personal sacrifices to make her mother better. She doesn't always know why she is doing what she is doing, but what she does know is that she finds solace when she is sacrificing her comfort for her mother's well-being. In fact, Fig feels that it may be her only purpose in life.

This book allows the reader to see not only what life is like for the family member of a person struggling with mental illness, but also how mental illness affects the individual, as Fig grapples with intrusive thoughts and compulsions. One of the key strengths of the book is Fig's unique voice as a first-person narrator. This voice evolves throughout the book as Fig ages. In the beginning of the book, when Fig is a six-year-old, the way she sees the world at that age influences the narration of the book and which information is given. However, as time passes, Fig has a greater awareness of what is happening around her, and her voice matures to reflect that. One thing that is important about this book is that there are no "superhero" characters. Though some characters handle tough situations better than others, each is flawed. Though family members and authority figures try their best to see Fig's needs and help her, there is no one that is perfectly capable of helping either Fig or her mother.

*Contains moderate violence.