



2018

Where the Watermelons Grow

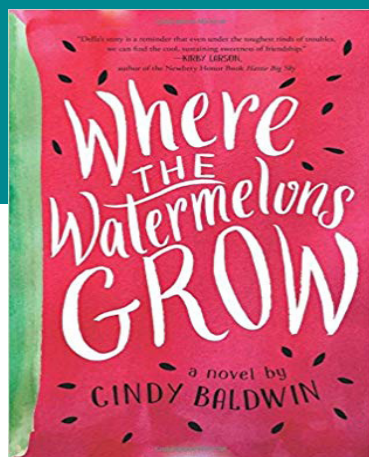
Erica Murdoch

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Murdoch, Erica (2018) "Where the Watermelons Grow," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 39 : Iss. 11 , Article 85.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol39/iss11/85>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Children's Book and Media Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.



Book Review

Where the Watermelons Grow

One night, Della Kelly tiptoes downstairs for a glass of water, but finds her mother, Suzanne, fixated on removing every seed from a plate of watermelon slices. Although the Kellys have cultivated and consumed watermelons for generations, Suzanne is utterly convinced that they will be unsafe for her daughters if even a single seed remains. Della is accustomed to seeing her mother worrying and obsessing. After all, Suzanne does have schizophrenia. Nevertheless, Della has not seen her mother this sick for a long time. Desperate to find a cure, Della begs Miss Tabitha for some of her magic honey, known for curing all kinds of ailments. Yet Miss Tabitha insists that Della is the one who needs healing, not her mother. This sparks a journey in which Della learns to cure her broken heart with a salve of friends and family rather than trying to fix her mother's broken mind.

Where the Watermelons Grow is a much needed narrative for modern children. In a society where mental illness is enduringly taboo, this novel provides an important and often untold perspective. Della's voice is candid and authentic and explores a difficult topic in a way that is both appropriate and accessible for middle grade readers. Upper-elementary children and middle schoolers will relate well to Della's relationships, particularly with her best friend, Arden, and her mischievous little sister, Mylie. Notwithstanding the many well-developed supporting characters and their roles in the work, the central theme of the text is Della's learning to forgive her parents as she accepts herself. This message is reminiscent of many great pieces of children's literature, particularly *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse and *Harbor Me* by Jaqueline Woodson. Like the protagonists of those two acclaimed novels, Della must learn to accept her family members as they are, love them for who they are, and forgive them for things that have gone wrong in the past.

Author

Cindy Baldwin

Illustrator

Reviewer

Erica Murdoch

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

256

Year

2018

Publisher

Harper Collins

ISBN

9780062665867