

Blood Water Paint

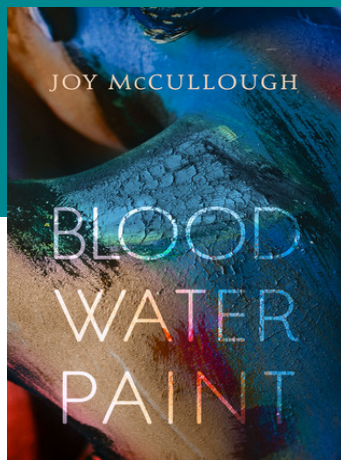
Abigail Packard

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Book Review

Blood Water Paint

Author

Joy McCullough

Illustrator

Reviewer

Abigail Packard

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

304

Year

2018

Publisher

Dutton Books for Young Readers

ISBN

9780735232112

Artemisia Gentileschi is a gifted artist. But as a seventeen-year-old woman in Rome during 1610, she cannot be the painter she wants to be. So Artemisia settles as her father's assistant, grinding paints and painting everything under his name. As Artemisia's work becomes more well-known, offers begin coming her father's way for commissions. Along with that comes a mentor: Agostino Tassi. Tassi begins teaching Artemisia, and their work relationship turns romantic. One day, however, Tassi rapes Artemisia, and she spirals into depression. She gains the courage to tell her father, and they take Tassi to court. In order to prove that she's telling the truth, Artemisia is tortured to see if her accusations remain the same under the immense pressure of physical pain. In the aftermath of the trial, Tassi is sentenced to two years in prison, and Artemisia works to regain control of her battered hands so that she can paint great works that are reminiscent of her experiences.

Joy McCullough's historical novel is a timely true story of one young woman's sexual assault and her consequential decision to speak out against her assailant. Told in flowing verse, McCullough uses first person to fully place the reader in the historical environment. McCullough also references both Artemisia's work and the stories that these works are about in order to add depth to this harrowing story. The writing is a little heavy-handed and didactic instead of allowing the reader to piece together everything that is happening and make sense of it all on their own. Moreover, the language that McCullough uses as she describes Artemisia's story is definitely modernized, which isn't exactly a sin, but in historical fiction it does create a bit of a barrier that keeps the reader from fully immersing in the time period. Despite these flaws, *Blood Water Paint* is a stirring novel that explores themes of trauma, survival, truth, and, ultimately, hope and healing.

*Contains moderate sexual content and moderate violence.