

Sparrow

Emily Loveless

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Book Review

Sparrow

Author

Sarah Moon

Illustrator

Reviewer

Emily Loveless

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Young Adult

Pages

272

Year

2017

Publisher

Arthur A. Levine Books

ISBN

9781338312867

Sparrow's life has felt like it is getting better. Because of Mrs. Wexler, she's found new worlds in novels and a few potential friends who also take refuge in the library. Then Mrs. Wexler is killed in a car accident, and everything Sparrow is working so hard to hold together unravels completely. But Sparrow isn't on the roof to jump. She is looking for the birds, needing the escape of flying with them more than ever, but the birds don't come. Her mother says therapy is 'for white girls,' and Sparrow is resolved not to say a word. Encouraged by her therapist, Sparrow attends a summer girls' camp for rock & roll that challenges the progress she's slowly been making but provides new opportunities for her to make her first friends since kindergarten. The birds don't come for her now, but she doesn't need them anymore.

Sparrow's voice and character are clear and distinct. Her discomfort and frustration bleed from the pages, and while she's not a chatty girl, she speaks like an actual teenager (occasional cursing included). Her story is poignant, and readers will be rooting for her all the way to the end. Anyone who's ever been a teenage girl will see pieces of themselves in Sparrow's experiences with school, peers, and adults. Sparrow's pre-rooftop story is told non-linearly through her time with her therapist. This fragmented storytelling feels similar to how we remember and process our own lives, especially as discussed in therapy settings. There are multiple places in the book that could have been the ending if written by another author, but Moon is committed to a truthful look at the process that goes into the work of treating mental and emotional issues. Sparrow's road is not smooth or easy—it's not a one-and-done kind of problem, and in sticking to the real and gritty, Moon has provided a feeling of authenticity that teens and adults alike will find refreshing.

*Contains moderate language.