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Mostly the Honest Truth

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Jane Pengilly is being sent to a weird town out in the boonies for twelve days—the time needed for her Pop to get better from his sickness that comes after he’s been drinking a lot. If the weirdness of the town Three Boulders wasn’t enough, Jane has a hurt hand from the last night she saw Pop that doesn’t seem to want to get better. A couple days, a few new friends, some outstanding home-cooked breakfasts, and a lot of mischief later, Jane finds herself in trouble but feeling more at home than she ever has in any of her other foster homes. As she sorts through her confusion about missing Pop but wanting to remain with her new friends, Jane figures out the real meaning of the names of the boulders that stand outside the town: Forgiveness, Redemption, and Community. Jane’s heart and hand both heal as she finds family in both Three Boulders and with her Pop.

Mostly the Honest Truth addresses the difficult and mature themes of alcoholism, foster care, and truth in a way that is accessible and appropriate for grade-school readers. The characters are likable and believable, though there are some holes in the setting of the story that do not describe how certain characters came to be part of the Three Boulders community. This book is a relatively easy read that younger children may manage, but some of the content may disturb younger grade-schoolers. This is a hopeful story that depicts a child making a difficult but wise decision. Children who have friends or are themselves in difficult home life situations may relate to the ups and downs in this books and find comfort and understanding in its pages. Parents should be aware of mature content including descriptions of self-harm as a result of emotional neglect, substance abuse, and violent acts (accidental shooting of a child) committed under the influence of alcohol.

*Contains mild violence and mild drug abuse.*