



2019

Starworld

Katharine Davidson

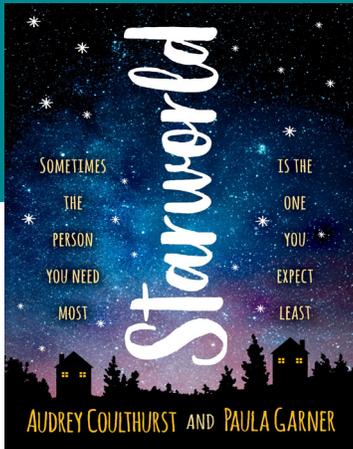
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Book Review

Starworld

Sam Jones is a self-proclaimed nerdy “robot” who loves aerospace engineering and painting surreal landscapes and hates everything to do with the high school social scene. Zoe Miller is an outgoing, people-pleasing popular girl who loves being on stage in school musical and performances. It’s surprising, then, when these two girls connect over one of Sam’s paintings. They eventually form a deep bond of friendship over shared fears and struggles with family through an imaginative world, “Starworld,” created via texting to help them both find refuge from reality. As Sam and Zoe help each other through various trials, the closeness brings up complex emotions for both girls. Sam, starting to figure out her sexuality, finds herself attracted to Zoe, even though Zoe has never given any indication of feeling the same way about Sam. However, with the help of tacos, hot sauce, a dragon named Humphrey, and, most of all, each other, Sam and Zoe learn what it means to be loved and what it means to be human

Starworld is a sensitive and smart novel discussing poignant issues of family and friends. The authors grapple with personal and social issues in ways that are firm yet show sincerity and understanding. They explore Sam’s sexuality and attraction to Zoe in a way that captures the deep emotional struggle a teen worried about their attractions might feel while in no way diminishing or negating her feelings. Zoe does not end up returning Sam’s romantic love, but loves her in a way characteristic of close female friendship. The relationship between Sam and Zoe feels real and multi-dimensional. The authors also describe in some detail Sam’s mother’s OCD and Zoe’s brother’s disabilities and they are presented in ways that are kind while still showing how difficult they are for the families. Readers should be aware of some mild instances of teenage sexual suggestiveness (e.g., a make-out scene, some innuendos, and references to sexting and having sex), some instances of severe language, and several scenes of teen partying. Overall, Starworld is insightful and enjoyable, depicting difficult teenage struggles and strong friendships in believable and meaningful ways.

*Contains severe language, mild sexual content, and mild substance use.

Author

Audrey Coulthurst, Paula Garner

Illustrator

Reviewer

Katharine Davidson

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Young Adult

Pages

352

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Publisher

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