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Right Behind You

Emma Patton

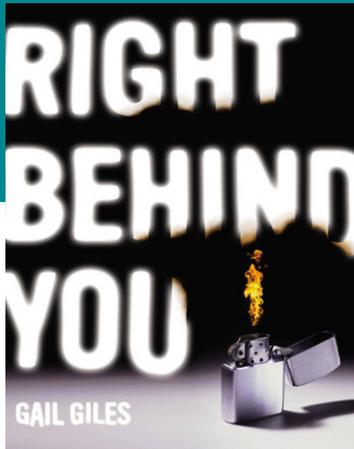
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Book Review

Right Behind You

Author

Gail Giles

Illustrator

Reviewer

Emma Patton

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

311

Year

2007

Publisher

Little, Brown and Company

ISBN

9780316166379

Kip McFarland is a monster. Or, at least, that's what people say. When he was nine years old, he set another kid on fire, and consequently spent the next several years in juvenile detention facility. But the time has come for Kip to leave the ward and start living as normal a life as he can. There are still people who think his punishment was too light for the crime and his family has been targeted, so he must change his name and move to a new town if he really wants a chance at a new life. Kip's dad is excited for the move, since it will be a fresh start for him as well. Kip knows he should be excited to be a real teenager, but there's something holding him back. Part of him doubts that he'll ever be able to leave his past behind him. Because even if the people around him don't know what he did, he will always carry that truth, and he struggles to believe that he will ever be able to forgive himself and move on.

Right Behind You is an interesting story with strong and dynamic characters. Author Gail Giles does an excellent job of writing Kip, who is complex and basically goodhearted, but also deeply flawed. It can be difficult to feel empathy for those who do terrible things, especially when they do those terrible things intentionally. But the character Kip challenges a reader's beliefs about what makes a person bad or good and shows that duality exists in everyone. Right Behind You also features several positive adult influences in Kip's life. Though Kip's father, stepmother, therapist, and other role models have their own issues and insecurities, they model important attributes and serve as beacons of hope for Kip and possibly for the readers. Kip's story does seem to end too soon, and the buildup of the narrative does not lead to a very satisfying conclusion. The story ends with unanswered questions, but also the likelihood of Kip's further development into who he ultimately wants to be.

*Contains moderate sexual content, severe language, mild substance abuse, and moderate violence.