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How to Disappear

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Book Review

How to Disappear



vicarious
© The only way to be seen is to hide who I really am.

SHARON HUSS ROAT

Author

Sharon Huss Roat

Illustrator

Reviewer

Emma Patton

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

377

Year

2017

Publisher

HarperTeen

ISBN

9780062291752

Vicky has always been shy, but that has never mattered until her best (and only) friend moves away. Once Jenna is gone, Vicky realizes just how much she relied on Jenna to help her navigate life, but when she talks to Jenna about it, she realizes that Jenna has already made some new friends and is doing fine without her. Vicky realizes that maybe she needed Jenna more than Jenna needed her. Feeling pathetic and wishing she had a different life, Vicky creates an alter-ego and Instagram account named “Vicurious” and puts her Photo-shop skills to work, creating pictures of her character doing exciting and daring things—things that Vicky herself would never do. Something about just seeing the pictures makes her feel like she’s experiencing life the same way that other people are. Vicurious starts as just a personal project, but it quickly grows to become bigger than Vicky could have ever planned. Suddenly, she has a voice that people are listening to, and she has to learn to be okay with being heard.

In *How to Disappear*, author Sharon Huss Roat does an excellent job of describing the experience of a girl with crippling but undiagnosed social anxiety. Vicky herself is a complex and interesting character, but this book is even more impressive in its featuring of numerous dynamic secondary characters. These characters are unique and easily distinguishable but also each have something that makes them relatable. *How to Disappear* takes place mostly in the high school culture, and Vicky thinks she knows everything about her fellow students. However, as events unfold, she learns the valuable lesson that everyone is struggling in their own way and nobody has it all together. This book also gives an accurate view of social media, exploring how Instagram can connect its users but can also lead to isolation. Though the book is original and compelling, the ending is predictable and lacks depth. It presents everything as “solved,” without acknowledging the ongoing difficulty that Vicky will have in navigating her anxiety and her newfound relationships.

*Contains mild language.