



2020

### Awake in the World

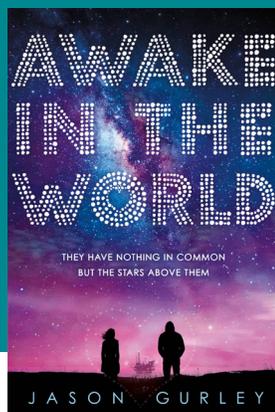
Taylor Bitton

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## Book Review

# Awake in the World

### Author

Jason Gurley

### Reviewer

Taylor Bitton

### Rating

Excellent

### Level

Young Adult

### Pages

324

### Year

2019

### ISBN

9781250141835

### Publisher

Roaring Brook Press

The coastal town of Orilly, California has always demanded a lot of its residents, and that is something teenagers Vanessa and Zach are only beginning to understand. Zach has lived in Orilly his whole life and plans to work at the oil rigs straight after high school, just like his father and brother have done. His father was killed by an unexpected storm while on the rigs years ago, and his family needs the money now more than ever. Vanessa just moved to Orilly with her mother and wealthy stepfather, and all she can think about is leaving this tiny town to attend Cornell, her dream college. As Zach and Vanessa's friendship grows into romance, the two must learn how to reconcile their differing circumstances while maintaining hope for a bright future.

This book takes a jarring and realistic look at the lives of people living in poverty. Zach's family is under extreme financial stress, and Zach feels responsible for shouldering the financial burden. This shows how little opportunity is realistically available to low-income families, as most must earn money immediately instead of furthering education. Told in chapters alternating from Zach and Vanessa's points of view, readers can see both contrasting perspectives of wealthy and poor, adding depth and insight to the story. This story also breaks the traditional romance mold, showing a relationship does not have to end in happily ever after for it to be fulfilling.

\*Contains severe language.