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Smile

Debbie Barr

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Reviewer: Debbie Barr  
Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult  
Rating: Excellent  
Genre: Autobiographies; Humorous stories;  
Subject: Self-esteem in adolescence; Girls--Dental care; Graphic novels; Books--Reviews;

As a sixth grader, Raina isn't looking forward to getting braces. At least she'll only have them for two years, though. How bad could it be? Pretty awful, as it turns out. When Raina trips after a Girl Scout meeting, she knocks her two front teeth out of place. The dentist tries to repair the damage with a cast, but when that fails to work Raina undergoes years of dental work in order to get her teeth straightened out. Braces, root canals, fake teeth, and retainers all play a role in getting her mouth back to normal. Despite all the dental drama, Raina still lives the life of a normal teenager, getting her ears pierced, crushing on boys, and dealing with friend problems. In the end not only does Raina get her smile fixed, but she learns to trust and love herself, no matter what she looks like on the outside.

Raina Telgemeier wrote and illustrated *Smile* based on her own traumatic dental experiences that started in middle school and lasted into high school. It's a quick but fun read, with great illustrations that are just as fun and goofy as the story. Even readers who haven't had to deal with braces will relate to Raina's experiences, as she puts just as much emphasis on her normal teenage problems as the dental ones. At times both painful and sweet, *Smile* is a wonderful graphic novel that portrays the insecurities and problems of teenage life in a relatable and fun way.

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