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Something About America



Synopsis

"Maria Testa uses spare verse to tell a poignant story about a child touched by war. . . . An excellent choice for classroom discussion." *—*• BOOKLISTThe thirteen-year-old from Kosova thinks of herself as a typical American schoolgirl. But for her parents, moving to Maine was just a sad necessity, a way to escape from war and find medical care for a daughter scarred up to her chin. But then a hateful event changes everything *—*• forcing residents old and new to reexamine what it means to be an American.A New York Public Library Book for the Teen AgeA Bank Street College Best Children*—*•s Book of the Year

Book Information

Paperback: 96 pages

Publisher: Candlewick; Reprint edition (August 28, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0763634158

ISBN-13: 978-0763634155

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.3 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #643,321 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #54 in *—*• Books > Teens >

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Customer Reviews

Grade 6-8*—*• In poetic free verse, a 13-year-old narrator describes her life in America after having been horribly burned during the war in Kosova. While she still carries the scars, she has assimilated into American culture much more than her parents. This book offers a brief glimpse into the lives of refugees from the Kosovar War. However, the poetic form limits the plot and character development, leaving readers with many more questions than answers about what happened to these remarkable people. When an act of racism inspires the entire town to stand up against prejudice, readers will cheer for the ideal, but not for the individuals, who never appeared to have been affected by it. This topic, inspired by actual events in Maine, needs a more detailed narrative and fully fleshed out characters to be truly compelling. Libraries with a need for stories about war refugees may want to consider this title as an additional purchase.*—*• Sonja Cole, Briarcliff

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Gr. 6-9. The author of *Becoming Joe DiMaggio* (2001) and *Almost Forever* (2003) once again uses spare verse to tell a poignant story about a child touched by war. Burn scars, sustained in Kosovo during the most recent war, cover most of the narrator's body: "I look like / where I'm from," she says. Even so, the eighth-grader feels like a "typical American schoolgirl." Her parents are more at odds with life in the U.S., and the girl speaks powerfully about the heartbreaking choices her parents have faced. But after the girl's father organizes a protest against a hate group in a neighboring town, the family is heartened by the public's response and support. Testa's distilled poetry never seems forced, and her stirring words enhance a sense of the characters' experiences and emotions, particularly those of a young person caught between cultures: "I have two languages / in my head / and no accent / on my lips." Based on an actual incident, this is an excellent choice for readers' theater and classroom discussion. Gillian Engberg Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Nice book of poetry. Gives you insight into the world that few experience.

Told in the first-person-narrative through a series of revealing poems, *SOMETHING ABOUT AMERICA* will seem so HONEST and so REAL that you'll be tempted to think it's NONFICTION instead of FICTION. *SOMETHING ABOUT AMERICA* features a fictional heroine who has immigrated from Kosova, Albania, with her parents ten years ago. When the narrator was three or four, she was burned. The family escaped their war-torn country seeking refuge in a land with burn centers and facilities able to help their daughter recover. Her father had always dreamed of freedom in America, but years after 9/11, the father is tired of having everyone look at him with suspicion because he is a FOREIGNER. He's tired of being seen as un-American. But the daughter considers herself an American. She can't really remember her former home or former life. The father is torn between returning to his country, which is no longer at war, and staying in America and making a new life. When members of their town voice a protest against the growing number of foreigners, the father makes his decision and makes a counter-protest to show his patriotism and devotion to America and his commitment to his daughter. The poems are well-written. The voice of the character is very well done. She's a well-developed and believable character.

This is an excellent book to use with mid-to-high-level readers in grade 5. I used it in my poetry class and my students got a lot out of it--both from the cultural perspective it introduces, but the exposure to sophisticated yet still accessible language.

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