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By The River



Synopsis

Harry Hodby lives in a sleepy town on the bend of a sluggish river in Australia. Harry spends most of his time swimming in Pearce Swamp, eating watermelon with his brother and dad, escaping schoolyard bullies, being in love with the secretary, and racing through butterflies in Cowpers Paddock. But life in this small river town isn't always easy. Harry's mother died when he was seven, and his friend Linda was swept away in a flood. Harry yearns to leave town even though he knows that people who get away never come back. His father has told him how to get out of town, but there's a mystery that he needs to solve before he can go...A deeply atmospheric story in verse about the tough and tender sides of growing up in a small country town.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Grade 8 Upâ "Through rich, vivid poetry, Harry Hodby brings readers into his remote Australian town. He documents the mundane and unique qualities of daily life and the quirkiness of the townspeople, and gives a lively sense of locale. Three-dimensional characters come alive as Harry offers his insightful take on their strengths and foibles. A likable, perceptive, sensitive teen, he is intuitive beyond his years. His mother died when he was seven and now he shares his life with an attentive father and a brother, Keith, one year his junior. His father has built a nurturing home for the boys, though some wagging tongues are quick to criticize. Although there are adventures, Harry

finds the town boring and yearns to escape for a time some day, but he worries that too many people have left and never returned. He also mourns for his friend Linda, who was swept away when the river on which the town is situated swelled and overflowed its banks. He secretly tends a shrine created in her honor, only to discover later that he is not alone in his admiration of her. This is a beautifully and sensitively written novel featuring a caring, intelligent protagonist.â “Renee Steinberg, formerly at Fieldstone Middle School, Montvale, NJ Copyright Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 9-12. Australian poet Herrick's contemporary novels in verse have included *Love, Ghosts, and Facial Hair* (2003). Here, Herrick applies his terse, shimmering lines and coming-of-age vignettes to a story set in small-town Australia. In 1962 Harry Hodby, 14, dreams of escaping his sleepy, riverside community, but he is held by the memories of loved ones lost in the seasonal floods--his mother and his lively, brilliant best friend, Linda. Herrick's brisk, vivid poetry, filled with precise details, creates a luminous sense of place and character, from the greasy shacks and hot, quiet riverbank to the nosy, colorful townspeople. The wistful nostalgia and languid pace may deter some readers, but the memorable scenes (many of which stand alone beautifully as individual poems) are sly and affecting as they capture timeless adolescent curiosities: his neighbor's sexual conquests, girls, God, his future, and, perhaps most of all, how to move past grief to honor and hold what he loves. Gillian Engberg Copyright Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

A novel of growing up. If you have ever lived in a small town, this book will bring back memories. The verse style is easy to read but not trite.

Life is hard here. Periodically the river rises and floods this little Australian town. A beautiful poem of a book.

I teach a verse-novel unit in my eighth-grade class and am always looking for those that will especially appeal to my young men. This one succeeds as a male-perspective, exploring topics such as relating to a father, relating to a sibling, loving and hating where you grow up, sex, and death. It's definitely coming-of-age rather than an action-driven story, however, which is something to keep in mind when you're selecting a reader. Still, very well-written, depth, and certainly worth reading.

"By the River" is a novel written in poetic verse. The story of Harry Hodby is told through small glimpses into his life. One poem about sitting with his friend Linda listening to her read stories she's written, another poem about weeding the patch of daisies that grow at her grave site a year later. We learn Harry's story: his friends, his family, the town where he lives, and his thoughts on life through the most poignant little scenes. I love all of Herrick's works. His characters are so relatable and vulnerable. Each poem is written in the way my thoughts run: slightly disjointed and rambling, but with a clear idea or emotion behind it all. By the river will take you into the mind of a young teenage boy who is learning about friendship, love, family and himself. I highly recommend this book, and I would also like to recommend my favorite Steven Herrick novel: "The Simple Gift".

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