

Book review

All the Bright Places

Category: Book Reviews / Fiction

Author: Jennifer Niven

Year: 2015

Publisher: Penguin Random House Children's, UK

ISBN: 9780141357034

Audience: For Youth

Summary: A young person's novel about a girl, a boy, grief, mental illness and stigma



I wish I read *All the Bright Places* when I was 15 or when I was at university. Luckily, Jennifer Niven has finally written the book we all need.

The story is simple: It's about a girl and a boy, yet all isn't what it appears to be. Violet is trying to understand the meaning of being a survivor while grieving for her sister. Finch is trying to do anything that keeps him awake and present in the moment. Together these teens work through all the complicated emotions which make life what it is, yet when you believe they are reaching a healing place, their lives spiral out once more.

This book beautifully illustrates what grief is and what power a stigma has. Instead of telling the reader how a character feels, Niven is able to express the emotions which grip at your lungs and burn the back of your mind and throat. "She sighs, and I've never heard anything like it. It's a sigh full of pain and loss".

Physical sickness vs mental sickness

This is the first young adult novel that accurately explains the true feeling people with poor mental health are dealing with. "The fact is, I was sick, but not in an easily explained flu kind of way. It's my experience that people are a lot more sympathetic if they can see you hurting... just to make it simple for me and also for them".

All The Bright Places is a book that will stay with you, it is a book that people want to talk about and should talk about. This book is for anyone who enjoys a lovely story, who has ever gone through depression, or has had a loved one go through depression.

Niven wishes for readers to understand: "Labels like 'bipolar' say: This is why you are the way you are. This is who you are. They explain people away as illnesses".

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This book doesn't label, doesn't give answers, and doesn't know the reasons why; it exists so we can all understand and love.

Reviewed by Kate Cherven, Communications and Fundraising Intern at the Mental Health Foundation

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