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Stargirl

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Not a Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This American teenage novel is a hymn to nonconformity. Stargirl, aged 15, has been homeschooled, and makes a belated entry to the local High School in a small Arizona town. In a conformist environment, where everyone dresses, eats, behaves and thinks like everyone else with gender as the only differential, her eccentric, demonstrative, bizarre behaviour creates convulsions in the school community. After the first shock has passed, she becomes hugely popular, only for new and less acceptable oddities to turn love to hate, and cause her to be ostracised by almost the whole school. The chief exception is Leo Borlock, who tells her story. Leo and Stargirl fall in love. The bemusement, pain and elation of first love are impressively caught in the novel, but its real originality lies in the character of Stargirl. She is almost a different kind of being, a different species, with an impartial generosity of spirit that small town America cannot take. Some readers may sympathise with small town America, and with Stargirl's peers. Not everyone would warm to a cheerleader who sometimes cheers for the opposition, or enjoy a birthday serenade in the school dining-hall from Stargirl with her ukulele. Others, however, will not dismiss the book as embarrassing and mawkish but read it as Spinelli clearly intends, as an allegory of finer human possibilities if evolution had taken a different course. Either way, it is a thought-provoking, challenging book.

Running Order:

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