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Hugging the Rock

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Following a trend started by Sharon Creech, **Hugging the Rock** is a verse novel that deals with a difficult subject with honesty and style. The story opens with Rachel's mother leaving home. She's stuffing her car full of everything that's important to her: everything except her daughter. At first Rachel retreats into her lonely, bewildered world, unable to communicate with her distant father. And even when her mother makes her weekly phone call, she is never interested in what Rachel has to say.

Slowly, Rachel begins to understand the painful truth of her mother's bipolar disorder and their chaotic life together. How her mother was unable to cope when she was a baby and how her now distant father was the one who fed her and cared for her. She also learns the hardest thing to know ? that although her mother loved her, she wasn't ready to have a child and never really wanted her. It was Rachel's father who fought for her existence.

There's a bit of a theme in the modern teenage novel of the problem mother and the child who has to take on too much responsibility, but it's not often that a developing relationship between child and father is so well told. He is her rock, at first the hard, immovable kind and later the solid type that you can lean on. It's a story of those who run away and those who stay and try to live with the mess and although it avoids an easy ending, there is redemption and hope.

What's the point of a verse novel? Wouldn't it add more if it was just a bit longer and more developed? Well like all good poems, there are no words wasted here; it's a quick read with a lot of punch, easily finished in a straight reading. It may well speak to reluctant readers in the 10-13 age group who still want a good, realistic story told with simplicity and style.

Running Order:

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