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# Alice in Time

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Alice Watkins is a 14-year-old with a fairly unhappy life. Her parents are divorced and her father about to remarry. She gets on badly with her mother and finds her seven-year-old brother Rory intensely irritating. At school she is at loggerheads with the most popular girl, Sasha. Alice has an unreciprocated interest in a boy named Seth, who (of course) is Sasha's step-brother. The bright spot in her life is her friendship with Imogen.

In the local park there is a magic roundabout, which can transport people in time. Alice ends up with her 14-year-old self inhabiting her seven-year-old body and sets off to fulfil four missions. She must save her parents' marriage, save her beloved cat from being run over, make Sasha's life as unpleasant as can be and find her way back to her own time.

Of course once Alice observes the behaviour of her seven-year-old self through more mature eyes, the person of whom she becomes most critical is herself. She has treated people, including Sasha, rather unfeelingly. Alice does her best to achieve her missions, with varying success. But when she manages to find her way back to her 14-year-old self, she finds that it's a new reality transformed by her different seven-year-old choices.

Mostly the reality to which Alice returns is preferable to the previous one, except that Imogen is no longer her close friend. The pace of this novel is well sustained, the characterization of Alice and Rory is strong and the story is narrated convincingly by Alice in the first person. However, I found it hard to believe in the magical properties of the roundabout and I felt the author lapses into didactic mode when Alice returns to her own time and place, having learnt from her round trip in time. But these are quibbles ? Penelope Bush has produced an ambitious and largely successful first novel that promises well.

Running Order:

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