



Moonrise

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Sarah Crossan goes from one challenging subject to another. This time she uses the verse novel form to consider the human repercussions of the death penalty as it is carried out in many American states. Joe's brother Ed is on death row in Texas and Joe decides to leave home in New York and miss the summer holiday high school track and field programme to support his brother in what will be his final appeal and possibly the final days of his life. The great strength of the verse novel is its ability to draw the reader inside the mind and voice of its protagonist, to look from the inside out. And everything here is grippingly portrayed: Joe himself; his family; the new friends in Texas; the hand to mouth, and sometimes squalid, circumstances in which he has to survive; the atmosphere of the jail and its run-down town; his brother Ed and their relationship. Perhaps the close involvement of the prison governor, and certainly the surprise connection that emerges between him and Joe, is not so convincing. Otherwise it's a penetrating and moving novel, skilfully moving between the past and the present, and between New York and Texas, and taking us into the heart of a family already battered by circumstance and now apparently helpless in the grip of a remorseless judicial process. Unsentimental, and driven by a controlled anger about the traps that society makes for the powerless, this is, like Crossan's previous novels, both moving and thought-provoking.

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