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Skylarks

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~~Not a choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

After years in which the genre has been dominated by dystopian and fantasy adventures, contemporary stories are sweeping YA, featuring protagonists that readers will immediately recognise, and exploring important themes and issues with sensitivity as well as passion. **Skylarks** is such a book.

Central character Joni lives with her parents and brothers in an ordinary house on an ordinary estate in rural south west England. The opening scene makes us aware that money is tight: the family work hard ? Joni herself has a paying job at the local community-run library ? but still struggle to make ends meet. It's in the library that Joni meets Annabel, a girl the same age as her but from a very different background. The two become friends, then gradually more, but as they get closer the differences between their lives are brought into sharp focus. Joni's family faces losing their home when their estate is bought and marked for redevelopment. Joni joins her brother in organising local protests and quickly learns just how energising the sense of community is, but also just how heavily the world is stacked in favour of those who have wealth and power.

Joni is a convincing and appealing central character who changes and grows throughout the course of the book, while her voice remains direct and distinctive. Joni's family, friends and neighbours are equally well drawn and if Annabel's family are less convincing, they serve their purpose and this works both as a romance and a story of social awakening. There's a happy resolution which feels a little bit pat but nonetheless this is a true and honest bit of storytelling, about the kind of lives lived by lots of people and which seldom get the fictional scrutiny they deserve.

[Read our interview with Karen Gregory](#) [4]

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