

[PDF] Crooked

Tom McNeal, Laura McNeal - pdf download free book

Books Details:

Title: Crooked
Author: Tom McNeal, Laura McNeal
Released: 2007-05-08
Language:
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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Alternating the perspective of Clara and Amos, ninth-graders coming of age, Tom McNeal (author of the adult novel, *Goodnight, Nebraska*) and wife, Laura McNeal, convincingly capture the dynamics of adolescent relationships but muddy the novel with a problematic subplot. Clara Wilson's biggest worry is her crooked nose--until her best friend ditches her, and her parents suddenly separate. Amos MacKenzie's father is dying, his mother is obsessed with religion and his buddy Bruce stalks an intangible girl. Clara and Amos both become targets of town thugs Charles and Eddie Tripp. Readers may question the validity of a few key scenes involving these shady characters: for instance, when Amos attempts to save some snow sculptures from the Tripps' wrath, the brothers beat him unconscious with a baseball bat and Amos is consequently elevated to hero status at school; Clara, an otherwise clear-thinking teen, voluntarily takes a ride with Eddie Tripp when he shows up at her house uninvited--even though she has seen him stealing and knows of his involvement with Amos's injury. Without much buildup to a motivation for such

actions by the protagonists, scenes such as these undermine the teens' solid characterizations elsewhere. The book's strength lies in the interactions between Clara and Amos and their relationships with their respective families. Ages 12-up. (Dec.)

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From Library Journal Grade 6-10-In this fine first novel set in upstate New York, two ordinary teens navigate the complicated, sometimes scary world they inhabit. Clara Wilson, 14, has a crooked nose, a best friend who deserts her, and parents who argue all the time. When her mother accepts a teaching job in Spain, Clara feels abandoned and resentful. Fellow ninth-grader Amos MacKenzie has parents who embarrass him, and keep secrets from him. He enjoys a newfound popularity after being attacked by the town bad boys, Charles and Eddie Tripp, but is lost and confused when his father unexpectedly dies following exploratory surgery. His budding relationship with Clara is his only consolation. When the Tripp brothers vow revenge on Amos for reporting them to the police, he and Clara face intimidation, which draws them even closer together. In a dramatic climax, the Tripps break into her house and corner her in the attic. The McNeals' recognition of the angst of junior high with its fickle friendships, bullies, and first love make their novel one that mirrors real life. The characters' actions and reactions ring true as they try to cope with all of the changes that life has dealt them and still maintain a grasp on who they are. For most of the novel, the story is told from the alternating viewpoints of the two main characters, but in the climactic final chapters, their voices become blended. Readers will come away knowing that even though their paths have taken some unexpected twists and turns, these young people are on a straight and sure course.

Janet Hilbun, formerly at Sam Houston Middle School, Garland, TX

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