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Hold Still



Synopsis

The award-winning first novel from the bestselling author of *We Are Okay*. For fans of *13 Reasons Why*. In the wake of her best friend Ingrid's suicide, Caitlin is left alone, struggling to find hope and answers. When she finds the journal Ingrid left behind for her, she begins a journey of understanding and broadening her horizons that leads her to new friendships and first love. Nina LaCour brings the changing seasons of Caitlin's first year without Ingrid to life with emotion, honesty, and captivating writing.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Grade 10 Up
•After losing her best friend, Ingrid, to suicide, Caitlin is completely immobilized. Unable to function, and refusing to visit a therapist, she begins the long journey to wellness alone. During this year of heart-wrenching, raw emotion, Caitlin finds Ingrid's journal, which not only reveals her descent into irreversible depression, but also serves as Caitlin's vehicle for renewed hope in the future. The book is written with honesty, revealing one's pain after the loss of a loved one. Caitlin learns, with the help of new friends and her parents, that there is life after Ingrid.

•Sharon Morrison, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Durant, OK Copyright

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Praise for *Hold Still*: *YALSA Best Books for Young Adults* (2010); 2010 William C. Morris Honor Book *“LaCour makes an impressive debut with an emotionally charged young adult novel about friendship and loss. Publishers Weekly, starred review”* *“LaCour strikes a new path through a familiar story, leading readers with her confident writing and savvy sense of prose. Kirkus”* *“The book is written with honesty, revealing one’s pain after the loss of a loved one. School Library Journal”* *“A fresh voice to the world of young adult literature. VOYA , starred review”*

GRADE: A-4.5 Stars Caitlin’s best friend Ingrid commits suicide, leaving her journal beneath Caitlin’s bed. *HOLD STILL* is the story of the first year of Caitlin’s grief, as she comes to terms with the Ingrid she knew and the Ingrid who kept herself hidden. In that year, broken into seasons, Caitlin will find a new friend, discover two talents and get her first boyfriend. Losing a friend as a teenager is difficult under any circumstances. For many, it’s a first experience with loss, mortality and a reminder that we aren’t guaranteed futures. Suicide compounds the grief process with questions of guilt--Could I have done something to prevent this. Nina LaCour brilliantly shows Caitlin’s grief process, from sadness, numbness, anger, confusion and a myriad of other emotions by giving her an authentic voice. Caitlin is a complex character, not always friendly or kind. She doesn’t always make the best decisions, particularly in the months after the suicide. I love LaCour’s writing style as well as her storytelling skill. My only criticism is I wish LaCour had ventured into anger at Ingrid, which would have been even more realistic. Anger at the deceased is a common emotion for those left behind in the wake of suicide. *HOLD STILL* is an important book for those grieving from suicide or any death, as well as a story of hope in the face of sadness.

Honestly, I don’t regret reading this book. There were a handful of times that I was thinking to myself “wtf”, as well as a couple loose ends (I won’t say to not spoil the story), but other than that it was enjoyable and touching. As someone who has been suicidal most of their life, it definitely made me step back and think about the effects that I have on others, especially my best friends. As horrible as it sounds, the thought was placed into my head that if I had killed myself, my best friend would probably be in the same position as Caitlin. I’m planning on reading Nina LaCour’s other works as well, her writing in this book really flows together and even though the subject matter is tough, this

book really is a page turner.

I enjoyed *Hold Still*, but it isn't a book I'd recommend to all my friends. It's like so many other books about losing a friend and finding something they left behind. It was a very fast read, but also a heavy subject. It is by no means a book to read sitting on the beach trying to relax (as I did). I would recommend this book to someone who is struggling with losing someone they love--by death or even just by physical or emotional distance. The protagonist struggles with understanding who she is without her best friend and ultimately comes to the realization that she does have other connections in the world and can be a part of that world without her deceased friend.

A book that speaks to you on many levels by a fantastic author. I can't wait to read more by her.

"*Hold Still*" by Nina LaCour instantly became my favorite book as soon as I read it. It was the first book that I read in a very long time that made me not want to stop to the point where I would literally stay up all night just to finish it. And the funniest thing is that I only got this book by accident. "*Hold Still*" is considered to be a "young adult fiction" book and normally I would not be caught reading anything with that categorization, much less proclaiming it my new favorite book. Through a bit of luck, however, this book was misplaced at my local library and thus I found it under the regular new fiction as opposed to the new young adult fiction. After I had picked it up, read a little bit about it and decided I wanted to actually read the book, it was too late for me to do anything about the fact that it was what I considered to be "out of my age range" (too young for me). The story itself centers around a young girl named Caitlin who is returning to school the summer after her closest friend, Ingrid, committed suicide. Somewhat of an older theme, I know, but I don't classify these books. The interaction with other people, the whispers in the hall and just the overall blatant change that comes with such a loss and with such a feeling of having this void in your life is a big factor in this book. In a way, it is almost like what they call the phantom limb syndrome. The other big theme of this book, in my opinion, is moving on. Though this book ends on a happy note (I believe), it does take you through a lot of struggle, grief, remorse, anger, hatred, love and just the full spectrum of emotions. Often times when people kill themselves there is no clear reason or explanation, even when a note is left behind. Sometimes, maybe the person who takes their own life doesn't even know why they did it exactly. If you could bring them back to life and ask them just what was so awful that they had to die, I think most of them would not be able to give you a straight answer. In that way, this book is about moving on from that which we cannot control, cannot blame ourselves for and most

importantly cannot change once it has already happened. That is an important thing to learn in life to deal with no matter who you are or what your situation may be. Another underlying theme, which I find to be very important, in this book is art. Caitlin uses photography as a way to kind of put the past behind her and move on as much as she can at the time. And sometimes that's all you can do--move on little by little at a time. Much like the painter paints, the writer writes and the musician sings, photography is just another form of expressing our emotions and I truly do believe everyone needs some sort of art in their life as an outlet. Nina LaCour has a very straight forward every woman style of writing. It makes you feel like you're being told a story by your best friend late at night when you're up way past your bedtime and you don't want your parents to catch you on the phone. Kurt Vonnegut once wrote that the reason why it was harder to read a book than, say, watch a movie is because when you're not only having to focus on the words and comprehend them, but you also have to form the ideas and pictures in your own mind without the help of actors or really any focal points. I found myself thinking of that a lot after I read this book because LaCour's words just paint such a simple picture. While they are written in a way people can easily understand, they also do paint that picture for you with ease. You almost do feel like you're watching a movie more than reading as the story unfolds. (Though Mia Nollinger provides some excellent drawings in this book as well) I honestly read this book for the first time when I was going through what I like to refer to as the best worst time of my life. Several weeks after I read this book I was admitted to a mental hospital after an attempted suicide. Obviously, that isn't the good part. The good part is that I didn't die and I got help and am on the road to recovery. However, I cannot help but wonder when I looked back if this book influenced me at all negatively in my time when I was at my darkest. And honestly, I have to say that while, yes, it did influence me, it was never in a bad way. If you or someone you know lost someone to suicide, then you can probably find something in this book from Caitlin's point of view. But if you've ever thought about killing yourself or suffer from depression than you can probably relate to Ingrid, but hopefully see enough of the good in Caitlin that you don't want to end up like Ingrid did. This book really left me torn apart, honestly, because I saw myself playing the role of both the two main characters. On one hand, I was headed down the road where I was going to end up like Ingrid. On the other hand, I didn't fully want that to happen and I wanted to be more like Caitlin and just find a way to cope. So if anything this book definitely impacted me in a positive way and may have partially helped save my life. Not necessarily because I thought of how everyone I left behind would be like Caitlin and that upset me or made me want to change or just had an impact on me knowing people would eventually, little by little, move on every day. I can't exactly pinpoint that cross between the two characters and what made me feel the way I still do, but that's the beauty of

this book. And if nothing else, I mean, it really is only about the act of a suicide as much as "For Whom The Bell Tolls" is about a war.

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