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Diamond Willow



Synopsis

There's more to me than most people see. Twelve-year-old Willow would rather blend in than stick out. But she still wants to be seen for who she is. She wants her parents to notice that she is growing up. She wants her best friend to like her better than she likes a certain boy. She wants, more than anything, to mush the dogs out to her grandparents' house, by herself, with Roxy in the lead. But sometimes when it's just you, one mistake can have frightening consequences . . . And when Willow stumbles, it takes a surprising group of friends to help her make things right again. Using diamond-shaped poems inspired by forms found in polished diamond willow sticks, Helen Frost tells the moving story of Willow and her family. Hidden messages within each diamond carry the reader further, into feelings Willow doesn't reveal even to herself. *Diamond Willow* is a 2009 Bank Street - Best Children's Book of the Year.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Diamond Willow by Helen Frost is a short, concise story that packs a powerful punch. I finished it yesterday afternoon and it is still on my mind. The action of the story takes place over the span of a few short days, but don't make the mistake of assuming nothing happens. Willow grows and changes more in those days than most middle-schoolers do in a lifetime. This is a gorgeous book, despite the fact that there are no illustrations. Instead, this verse novel is told in a series of diamond-shaped poems, based on the shape of the diamond willow. Within each poem, a few words are bolded and when from top to bottom, they form a poem-within-a-poem, the heart of the story. Every single diamond is different, and the word choice in each poem is amazing. I sometimes stopped on a new page just to look at shapes, which almost served as illustrations. The story is simple and middle-grade students will easily connect with Willow and her family. Willow is a 12-year-old part-Native Alaskan who lives in a very remote town, accessible by snowmobile, plane, and boat. She is struggling with herself, with school, and with finding happiness. She begs her parents to mush the sled (with three of their six dogs) to her Grandparents house one weekend. While they say no at first, she is determined to prove her maturity and they finally give in. But on the way back there's an accident. From there, it builds and to go on would spoil the rest of the story, so I will stop there. but I will say you should pick this up immediately! One of my favorite parts of the story was Willow's connection to the past. She struggles throughout the book, all the while unaware that the animals surrounding her carry the spirits of dead ancestors and friends who care for her.

The sentence "I told you so!" is deeply satisfying. Granted, the satisfaction you feel when you say it only lasts a minute or two, but for a little while, as you do your "I told you so" dance, you get to feel that thrill of vindication sweeping through your veins. I often feel this way when an author or illustrator I've liked over the years starts garnering a little more notice. Admittedly Helen Frost is maybe not the best example I could call up. After all, she won a Printz Honor a couple years back for her book Keesha's House and her recent picture book Monarch and Milkweed has been getting nothing but sweet sweet loving from professional reviewers. All that aside, I've never felt that anyone has ever given Ms. Frost enough attention for her cleverness. When The Braid was published several years ago it was so smart, so sharp, and so interesting that it took everything I had not to bop people over the head with it at dinner parties. "BOP! Read this!" "BOP! Read this!" No such bopping will be necessary with her newest novel, though. "Diamond Willow" aims younger than Frost's usual teenaged fare. Examining the relationship between a girl and her sled dog, Frost combines her standard intelligent wordplay with a story that will catch in the throats of dog lovers and people lovers alike.

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