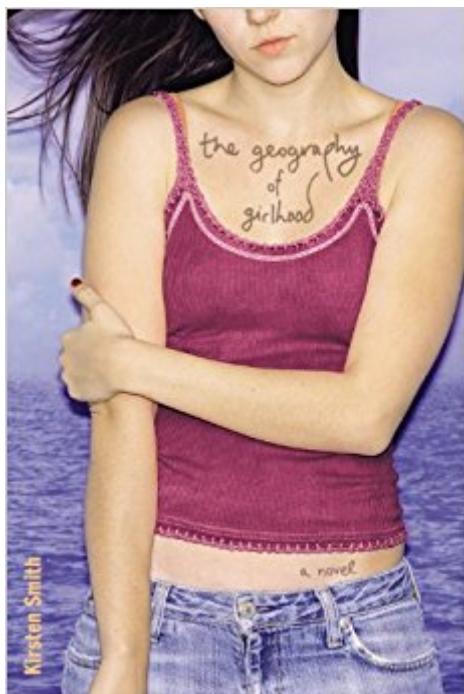


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The Geography Of Girlhood



Synopsis

Written in verse, this novel follows a girl from ages 14 to 18, exploring first crushes, first dances, first kisses, and the many dangers of growing up.

Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

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Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up This novel in verse follows Penny as she navigates the unpredictable and often harrowing waters of young adulthood, and her episodic narration reverberates with authenticity. She is a sensitive girl deeply affected by her mother's abandonment when she was six. Though many of the hurdles that Penny encounters are representative of typical small-town teens, she has an insight into other people and even into her own feelings that make this a penetrating portrait of growing up female. The selections touch on the mercurial nature of friendships, envy of an attractive older sister with a boyfriend, self-consciousness about her own body and beauty, longing to be in the in crowd while at the same time deriding the superficial behavior of its members, and adjusting to a stepmother and younger stepbrother. The everyday pain of adolescence rings true throughout this readable and honest story. There is some matter-of-fact mention of sexual situations and underage drinking. However, it is the clarity, the keen understanding, and the apt metaphors that make Penny's voice so memorable. Renee Steinberg, formerly at Fieldstone Middle School, Montvale, NJ

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Gr. 8-11. On her fourth birthday Penny received a globe from her mother: "If you ever need me . . .

just remember I'll always be somewhere on here." Two weeks later her mother left, never to return. In a powerful verse novel, Penny charts the landscape of her high-school years--her older sister's wild ways, her best friend's descent into depression, her first boyfriend's accidental death, her crush on a teacher, her father's new marriage, her protective relationship of her younger stepbrother, and, always, her longing for her missing mother. Overcome by the pain in her life, Penny runs away with her sister's ex-boyfriend, but realizes it's a mistake and returns home to heal. The geography metaphor and wanderlust theme successfully connect the poems, some of which were published previously in literary journals, and the emotions of high-school and small-town life are beautifully expressed: "nothing ever happens / and if it does / all the things with wings / fly away." Give this to Sonya Sones' fans or teens who have read Stephanie Hemphill's *Things Left Unsaid* (2005). Cindy Dobrez
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The thing about the *Geography of Girlhood* is that it feels so completely real. The author writes beautiful, non-cheesy prose poetry that has true depth, but it's the story that made me want to devour page after page. I read it more than once and am giving it to my best friend as a gift!

The *Geography of Girlhood* is simply about a girl growing up, becoming a young adult, without certain "guides". At a young age, Penny's mother left her and her family, leaving her, her sister and her father behind. Just like most sister relationships, Penny secretly looks up to her older sister while the two bicker and fight all the time. Penny struggles with all the little and large aspects in growing up as she starts high school. Kirsten Smith's use of Free-Verses offers a new point of view and way of relating to a teenage girl coming of age. Her clever use of geography images and symbolizes defines the truth that most girls (and women) are not as clearly defined as one may think. Just like Geography and Nature, a girl's emotions, thoughts, and adventures are anything but simple and normal. While there were a few times when it was unclear what Kirsten Smith was trying to say, through her use of over done symbols and imagery, one message beyond "geography" rang true in this Verse Novel: Mother. As Penny maps out her life without the guide (a key so to speak) of a mother she learns that does not need to be reliant on such a key and finds her own way to create her own individualistic "map". Overall, *The Geography of Girlhood* was a nice quick read that the entire female gender can relate to in one way or another - whether that be the many "loves" we go through, the "it's the end of the world" attitude about things, and even the realizations that come with growing up. For me the use of symbolisms was a bit overdone. It did get confusing at times - for

example, how exactly did Penny's best friend become crazy and why? Certain aspects such as this would have contributed to making the novel better if more detail was given. But again, poetry and verse are not always apparent and push us to read between the lines. In the end, Smith's novel was a very nice read and recommended for everyone.

This book is about a fourteen girl who wants to experience something big and dangerous. Her life is changing for getting new stepmother and new stepbrother. She is being jealous of her sister for inherited the beauty from the mom and she is not. Her mother left her when she was six and her relationship with friends is not all that close. In a way I really do like this book for Penny is changing like any other teenage girls are going through and the book reflect the ways of the girls' life and thinking. I would recommend to high school girls that are undergoing a change in their life and the same experience as Penny the main character in the book. Also to the teenagers who are really not like reading the novel that are too long and boring, I would recommend it because the book is in poetry format, but it really telling the story. This book is really kept me going for a long period of time without being tire or bore. The book has a flow that made the reader wants to continue until they finish the book.

This is the story of Penny Morrow, who, like so many others at any given time, is in the process of growing up and leaving childhood behind. Penny is ready for this. There have been things in her life, in the past, that Penny has not been ready for--like losing her mother. She wants to grow up and live outside of her home and family now. Outside of the house, she goes to parties and meets a boy. Inside it, she gets a new stepmother and stepbrother. Penny is growing up and her life is changing, and there's no turning back the clock. The Geography of Girlhood is a great story told in wonderful free-verse poetry that flows nicely and is easily understood. It's easy to follow the story and appreciate the poetry at the same time. Kristen Smith has written various popular movies and her poetry has appeared many places, so it is not surprising that she has chosen a verse novel to write; combining two things she knows best, good stories and great poetry. Kristen Smith has told a brilliant story that is even more brilliant because of the form in which it is told, in verse. Even people who do not believe that they like poetry will be pulled into this story, with its lifelike characters and a plot that can be understood by anyone who has been through or is going through the often painful process of growing up--that is to say, all of us. Armchair Interviews says: Nice, nice read.

Reviewed by Sondra Fowler for Reader Views (4/07) The "Geography of Girlhood" chronicles the

woes and ways of Penny, a girl we follow in verse through ages 14 to about 16. Penny has a wayward older sister who is hell bent on taking every bad path she can find, a dysfunctional and I believe dead mother, and a father who is trying to cope with an angst-ridden teen and the wayward older daughter on his own. Penny's father eventually marries and brings a new wife and step-brother into the mix. In the end Penny grows a bit and discovers her step-brother isn't so bad; her life is her life and she needs to accept it. I can't really say I identified with this novel - I despise teen angst. I didn't like it when I was surrounded by it as a teen. My own 14-year-old daughter read this book before I did. She said that she didn't get it. I think you had to have had a stormy girlhood or a dramatic nature to get most of this. I am sorry I cannot give this a better review - I am ill equipped. The writing itself was lovely and vivid and engaging. I think it is a grand idea. But just as every person is different, there are many maps of life to follow. This just wasn't mine. Book received free of charge

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