

Ages 10-12

Children's Book Reviews

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Review: Soar

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Soar

By Joan Bauer

Viking, 2016

DESCRIPTION:

Hillcrest Ohio is a town that is crazy about baseball – especially winning baseball. That is one reason why twelve-year-old Jeremiah looks forward to moving when his adoptive father Walt accepts a temporary job there repairing computers. Jeremiah too is crazy about baseball, but living with a heart transplant, he is unable to play. Unhampered by this limitation, his upbeat attitude and his knowledge of the game make this sixth grader an excellent coach. When Hillcrest's pitcher dies of an overdose of steroids, probably supplied by a coach who was determined to win, morale on the varsity team and in the town is low. Determined to resurrect the nearly defunct sport, Jeremiah steps in to build up a middle school team to take its place. With great heart, he recruits new members and renames them the Eagles. Working against negative attitudes of some of the students and parents, he breathes new life into the players and helps them to soar. The plucky hero does all this while balancing his health issues and maintaining his school work. His budding relationship with Franny who lives across the street adds a bit of romantic interest. Used to moving around to new locations because of his work, Walt, in the meantime, also finds interest in Jeremiah's cardiac doctor and perhaps motivation to settle down.

CRITIQUE:

Jeremiah and Walt are a winsome pair that quickly capture the heart. Jeremiah evinces wisdom beyond his years, encouraging his team members to perform well above their previous abilities. Not only that, he gives them a reason to be proud of themselves for more reasons than winning a game. The struggle with his heart condition adds poignancy to the story as he must consistently monitor and make modifications to his activities. Another issue presented is the constant adjustment to new locations caused by the transient nature of Walt's occupation. Baseball lovers should be happy with the abundance of baseball lore included, and those not that interested in the sport will certainly be drawn in by the uplifting story.

RELATED SUBJECTS:

Abandonment, Adoption, Baseball, Coaches, Family love, Heart transplants, Moving, Physical disabilities, School, Single-parent parent families, Sports, Steroids, Survival, Teamwork

CHARACTER THEMES:

Ambition, Cheating, Competitiveness, Confidence, Coping, Courage, Determination, Devotion, Family love, Friendship, Hope, Initiative, Inspiration, Leadership, Love, Resilience, Sacrifice, Self-respect, Steadfastness, Teamwork, Trustworthiness, Work Ethic

AWARDS:

Black-eyed Susan Book Award (MD), Bluestem Award (IL), Charlie May Simon Children's Book Award, Children's Choices, Christopher Award, Cybils Award, Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award, Golden Sower Award (NE), Great Stone Face Book Award (NH), Indian Paintbrush Book Award (WY), Iowa Children's Choice Award, Lamplighter Award, Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award, Maine

Student Book award, Mark Twain Award (MO), Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award, Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts, Pennsylvania Young Readers' Choice Award, South Carolina Junior Book award, Texas Bluebonnet Award, Volunteer State Book Award (TN), William Allen White Children's Book Award