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All We Have Left



Synopsis

Now: Sixteen-year-old Jesse is used to living with the echoes of the past. Her older brother died in the September 11th attacks, and her dad since has filled their home with anger and grief. When Jesse gets caught up with the wrong crowd, one momentary hate-fueled decision turns her life upside down. The only way to make amends is to face the past, starting Jesse on a journey that will reveal the truth about how her brother died. Then: In 2001, sixteen-year-old Alia is proud to be Muslim . . . it's being a teenager that she finds difficult. After being grounded for a stupid mistake, Alia decides to confront her father at his Manhattan office, putting her in danger she never could have imagined. When the planes collide into the Twin Towers, Alia is trapped inside one of the buildings. In the final hours, she meets a boy who will change everything for her as the flames rage around them . . . Interweaving stories from past and present, *All We Have Left* brings one of the most important days in our recent history to life, showing that love and hope will always triumph.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up • This beautifully written coming-of-age story traces the lives of two girls whose worlds intersect on September 11, 2001. Chapters alternate between the present-day story of Jesse, whose brother died on that fateful day, and an emotional account of Muslim teen Alia's experience inside one of the beleaguered Twin Towers. The wounds are so deep that Jesse's family doesn't talk about her brother Travis. Her parents are on the brink of a divorce, and she has feelings for a bad boy who leads her astray. After her arrest for hate speech tagging, she is sentenced to community service at the Islam Peace Center. Alia is a teenage girl and aspiring comic

book writer/illustrator. An incident at school causes her parents to withdraw permission for Alia to attend a program for talented high school artists. On September 11, she heads to her father's office at the World Trade Center to plead with him to change his mind. Jesse's journey to discover why Travis was at the Twin Towers and what happened to him before he died eventually leads her to a search for Alia, the girl Travis was with when the planes hit. Her work at the Islam Peace Center and the friends she makes there instill in Jesse a new understanding of Muslims and the Islamic faith. VERDICT This outstanding, touching look at a national tragedy promotes healing and understanding and belongs in every library. —Cindy Wall, Southington Library & Museum, CT

"Thoughtful, poignant . . . An important topic that deserves more dialogue than it receives. A moving portrait and important look at the lasting effects of one of our country's greatest tragedies." —Booklist | "Compassionately renders both the realistic lives, loves, passions, and struggles of Alia and Jesse as both deal with the fallout of that tragic day. . . . A poignant contemplation." —Kirkus Reviews, starred review | "Beautifully written. . . . This outstanding, touching look at a national tragedy promotes healing and understanding." —SLJ, starred review "[A] beautifully written coming-of-age story. . . . This outstanding, touching look at a national tragedy promotes healing and understanding and belongs in every library." - starred review, School Library Journal "The author elegantly transitions between the gripping descriptions of Alia and Travis trying to survive and Jesse almost falling into the abyss of generational hatred of Islam. In doing so, she artfully educates readers on both the aspects of Islam used as hateful stereotypes and the ruinous effects of Islamophobia. With almost poetic language, the author compassionately renders both the realistic lives, loves, passions, and struggles of Alia . . . and Jesse . . . as both deal with the fallout of that tragic day. Both a poignant contemplation on 9/11 and a necessary intervention in this current political climate." - starred review, Kirkus Reviews "Harrowing and realistic, highlighting bravery and courage against impossible odds. Mills movingly examines how easily pain can metastasize into hate, while demonstrating the power of compassion, hope, and forgiveness with equal force." - Publishers Weekly "Thoughtful, poignant . . . An important topic that deserves more dialogue than it receives. A moving portrait and important look at the lasting effects of one of our country's greatest tragedies." - Booklist "A timely plea for reconciliation suited to teens whose entire lives have unfolded in the lingering aftermath of 9/11." - BCCB "Poignantly heartbreaking. . . . While likely to evoke more than a few tears, the story is also hopeful, suggesting that even in the wake of unimaginable tragedy, love can outweigh hate, friendship can counter fear, and compassion and understanding can begin the healing process." - VOYA "Mills —

narrative mission--to portray the experiences of characters from very different backgrounds while bringing the horrific tragedy and its aftermath to life for contemporary teens--is fully accomplished. . . . [a] timely, ultimately hopeful story of love, courage, and human goodness when it matters most" - The Horn Book Magazine "Teens will appreciate this carefully researched and authentic exposé of a difficult subject. . . . A heartfelt, three-hankie exploration of a topic all too many teens must confront." - Kirkus Reviews on POSITIVELY BEAUTIFUL "Highly appealing to teens who would be interested in a more modern take on a well-trod genre." - SLJ on POSITIVELY BEAUTIFUL "The emotional core of the novel is convincingly powerful . . . teens will likely appreciate the well-researched depiction of losing a loved one to cancer." - Booklist on POSITIVELY BEAUTIFUL

A moving portrayal of the before and after of 9/11 and how it affects two teens and their families. Alia is a Muslim teen trying to break free of her parents' wishes. She ends up at her father's workplace in the Twin Towers on Sept 11, 2001. Jesse McLaurin is a teenager who lost her brother in the 9/11 tragedy. Jesse's family is now broken and silent about the event. Alternating narratives tell how the past informs the present, and how grief and memory merge and linger. Warning to readers: this is a slow read at the beginning. It took almost 35% before the action really built. And it's somber, as befits the topic. But the thing is, even though this isn't an easy read, I think it's one worth reading, for a few reasons: 1) I've never read a book that tries to portray what happened on 9/11 to people who were in the Towers. I felt this was done accurately, honestly, and respectfully for a teen audience. 2) The portrayal of grief, trauma, and a family still broken by what happened that day was really well done as well, showing the after effects of 9/11, even 15 years later. 3) This book tackles racial issues, hatred, prejudice, and grief in a way that is really compassionate and comprehensible. If I have qualms, they are that I just didn't fully connect with either Alia or Jesse. I think the concept of the book overcame the actual characterization of them. That said, I'm glad I read *All We Have Left*. It showed such a variety of perspectives on grief and trauma, and how to articulate and move past them. It definitely made me think about how we've changed as people and as a world after 9/11. Teachers, this is one for the school library and the classroom, and it's a great one to spark discussion.

GRADE: B On September 11, 2001 Alia skips school to see her father at work in The World Trade Centers. In 2016 Jesse must perform community service at a Muslim Peace Center after being

caught making anti Islamic graffiti. Their stories intersect in surprising ways. The first quarter of ALL WE HAVE LEFT started slowly, but the pace picked up and near the end I almost felt like I was reading a thriller, eager to discover if Alia survived. Wendy Mills did phenomenal research into 9/11 and the Muslim community, not painting the Islamic characters with a broad brush. Each had unique personalities and approaches to their faith. Some wore hijabs, others did not. Mills created a diverse cast of minor character with different personalities and beliefs. While ALL WE HAVE LEFT is an issues book about prejudice, I never felt that Mills was heavy handed in her message of the complexities of hate. There were no easy answers and no one character had the complete moral high ground. The intersection between past and present, Alia's and Jesse's stories, though mostly indirect, unfolded organically without artificial coincidences. ALL WE HAVE LEFT is a timely story, and Islamic prejudice is still prominent in the USA. I think this novel would be great reading for middle or high school students.

3.5 stars is an intensely moving tale that shows how perspective and misconceptions shape our understanding of history, even modern history. It is very difficult to like Jessie and her transformation throughout the book is remarkable and perfectly timed for the crossroads we find ourselves staring at, as a nation. There are so many poetic moments that made me really appreciate the writing of this text, but my favorite moment was this, "In my happiest times, like when I held my baby daughter for the first time, I feel Travis there. He is there in the unfinished part of my childhood, in the cocky smile of a young teenage boy I see on the subway. He is there in the potential of my daughter who would not be here today if it weren't for a shaggy-haired boy who died too soon."

This was a great book and I don't generally like YA. I was looking for some 9/11 themed novels for my son and I hope I can convince him to read this one. (Getting him to read anything is a battle.) Wonderful story, great emotional resonance and great character development. I highly recommend this one, especially for kids who were too young to remember 9/11 (or weren't even born yet). This gives a good sense of what it was like.

The time gap, the religion gap, the hate gap and the Love bridge make "all we have left" grab onto your heart and your mind for a ride we all need to take. The character development, the settings and the faithfully accurate descriptions put you in the middle of a remarkable tour through meaning and life itself. Enjoy the trip, and get ready to be changed.

This is an incredible story of love, loss, friendship and forgiveness. A fictional story that depicts the very real feelings of September 11th and the days and years after.

With the 9-11 anniversary around the corner, I thought I would include this book in my late summer reading. I am so glad I did. The author did a wonderful job of painting a picture of how awful it was inside the Twin Towers that day. I enjoyed how the book went back and forth between present day and Sept 11, 2001. None of the characters were perfect, they all had their flaws (although Adam is pretty perfect). I must admit I shed quite a few tears at the end. You won't be disappointed with this book. A quick read.

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