

Harmony Hollow

Donald G. Kramer

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Ron, Tim, and David are thrilled to return to their summer homes near the mountains in Washington State. The three friends always have a great time, and this year the trio are determined to explore the one place they've always wanted to go—Harmony Hollow.

A deep valley hidden in the woods, Harmony Hollow begs to be explored, especially given the recent Bigfoot sightings. Knowing that their parents won't allow them to go, Ron, Tim, and David pretend they are going to a familiar campground and instead head into the biggest adventure of their lives.

With camping, Bigfoot, and a large forest, *Harmony Hollow* definitely captures some perpetually popular elements of great stories. What the boys actually see and experience, such as tracking suspicious footprints, mysterious piles of berries, and helping rescue victims of a helicopter crash, do sound exciting and could draw readers in. However, these more intriguing aspects aren't supported in ways that make them believable or truly engaging. While there is some description, there is too little imagery to create a heightened level of intensity or suspense.

Considering the brevity of the book, the inconsistent pace of the plot is a problem. Less material on the boys' preparations and worries about their trip and more elaboration about their actual adventure would keep the book an approachable length for young readers, while also providing space to more fully build up the mystery and excitement.

The biggest hindrance to the novel is the sheer amount of dialogue, some of which is weak. The three boys don't speak very realistically, especially given the overuse of exclamation points. There is also a fair amount of redundancy in what the characters are saying and what they are doing. The imbalance between dialogue and narrative only exacerbates these flaws.

Donald G. Kramer is stronger at creating small moments that really echo some of the thrill and wonder that Ron, Tim, and David feel in the woods. As they follow a stream through Harmony Hollow, they marvel at a moose and a lone wolf. They fish in a river filled with small whirlpools. The addition of more details such as these could really help flesh out the boys' adventure.

There are also some grammatical and typographical errors that, together with the weaker aspects of the writing, give the novel a rather unfinished feel. Nonetheless, the spirit of adventure and intriguing plot pieces do create an interesting framework.

ALICIA SONDHI (January 3, 2013)

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