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Miles to Go

Gracie McKeever
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At first glance, Chris and Tori are easily passable for the stereotypes they assign to each other. To dismiss, however, either of these characters or this novel as stereotypical or underdeveloped would be a mistake. McKeever's novel of high school life in early '90s New York City is as fast as the runner whose story it tells. Miles to Go doesn't take any shortcuts when it comes to dealing with the issues teens face.

Christiano "Chris" Casanova's amazing running ability serves as the framework for this intense and dramatic novel. A high school senior, he is single-minded in his desire to break all past 1,500 meter records after a disastrous injury during his junior year. His small circle of friends and school work serve as his only other interests.

As his life becomes more complicated and his competition more threatening, he is distracted by a defensive and atypical girl, Tori. His relationship with Tori isn't without complications. A track teammate overreacts to Chris' interest in Tori and becomes violent toward the two.

Having lost an older brother to drugs, Chris, the straight-arrow, endures his parent's fears that Chris will share his brother's fate. In an unusual twist, Tori finds herself moving away from the drug and alcohol culture—peer pressure does indeed work both ways.

Chris's high school struggles make up the majority of Miles to Go, but it is by no means his story alone. Readers would be hard-pressed not to recognize a part of their own high school personality in the colorful characters who are a part of Chris's life.

While initially the novel may seem somewhat dated because of its slang and diction, this handicap is overcome by the universal, yet distinctive, quality of the story. One of the most sellable qualities of this novel is its wide appeal: something for high school guys as well as girls.

Although certainly a youth-oriented story, twenty-somethings who went to high school in the early '90s may want to give it a try. It's guaranteed to bring back memories of high school, written by a true voice of experience with a storyteller's originality.

COLLEEN MILLER (May / June 2001)

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