

Regine's Book: A Teen Girl's Last Words

Regine Stokke

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"I've decided to start a blog about what it's like to get a life-threatening disease." With these words, seventeen-year-old Norwegian Regine Stokke opens her heart and mind to the world as she shares her battle with a rare and aggressive strain of leukemia. Unflinchingly honest, *Regine's Book* is a moving account that will resonate with readers of all ages.

Regine's Book is not simply a personal diary. Regine chose to write blog entries for the public to read, and the editors have chosen to republish not just the entries, but a number of the comments from readers. Also included are guest blogger entries, Regine's artwork and photography, plus photos of and sections written by Regine's closest friends and family members. The result is something very different than a diary or even memoir.

While all of the additional content helps connect us to Regine and her journey, the comments are particularly significant. When her blog readers confess that they've donated blood (a cause which Regine championed), read an article about her in a local newspaper, or cried when they heard her bad news, readers can see first-hand the kind of impact Regine's story was having on all of Norway.

The heart of this book, however, lies in Regine's heartbreakingly honest and vivid emotions. The teenager's struggle to come to terms with her disease is not as linear as some may think. She doesn't simply hope for the best or peacefully accept her fate. Rather, she goes through complex emotions, one day feeling hopeful, the next struggling to "accept her war," as she says, and the next feeling resentful. Regine does not pretend to be optimistic for the sake of her readers. She instead presents them with the gravity of her situation, which, in turn, allows readers to more fully appreciate and respect Regine's determination and will to live.

Such a talented, engaging young person with such a dire prognosis does make for a difficult read, but the book doesn't feel clichéd or overly melancholy. Instead, readers connect with and learn from Regine. They'll cheer with her when she makes it to music festivals, ache when she is in pain, and, most significantly, challenge themselves to understand what she is truly going through.

A Junior Library Guild Selection, *Regine's Book* is a simultaneously poignant and inspiring read, and the young woman's story is one that will have a lasting effect.

ALICIA SONDHI (December 20, 2012)

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