

Roam

C.H. Armstrong

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C.H. Armstrong's compelling young adult novel *Roam* follows a homeless teenager as she and her family struggle to make a fresh start in a new town.

Abby is hurt and angry. Her family has been forced out of their home in Nebraska. They move to Minnesota, but they have no home, no jobs, and no prospects.

The story is told from Abby's perspective; she is clear in sharing her considerable emotional burdens. She is starting a new school and wants to fit in, but she was abandoned by her old friends and endured bullying. Now she is afraid to trust Wendy, Tara, Josh, and Zach. Keeping secrets from new friends is hard, but Abby is certain that she would be hated if people knew the truth about her family.

Abby also contends with feelings of betrayal toward her mother, whose actions prompted the family's move. She loves her mother, though—and her stepfather and young sister—and this is apparent in her actions. So is her anger. She longs for stability and security, but neither will come until she forgives her mother and lets go of the past.

The story is told with honesty. The family's problems are plausible and frightening, as are their actions to address them. Abby's search for understanding and forgiveness adds a meaningful layer to the story, even as her experiences are harrowing. The story illuminates important truths about homelessness. It becomes clear that just about anyone can be homeless, and finding a solution is not easy.

Roam is a study in empathy, forgiveness, and second chances—an impactful and memorable story of teenage homelessness.

CATHERINE THURESON (January/February 2019)

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