



Roar Like a Girl: Always Willa

Coleen Murtagh Paratore

Little Pickle Press (Aug 9, 2016)

Softcover \$9.95 (190pp)

978-1-939775-07-8

The lessons waiting for young readers in Roar Like a Girl are powerful.

Coleen Murtagh Paratore's *Roar Like a Girl* is a sweet story about a young girl struggling with change. Willa loves her life in the Cape Cod community of Bramble, and she is looking forward to her sophomore year in high school, until a single day shakes everything loose.

She breaks up with her boyfriend, the inn her parents own burns down, and her beloved dog, Salty, goes missing. Her mother decides it is time to take her life in a new direction, and too soon the family is heading for Troy, New York. Though determined to dislike Troy, Willa's natural optimism leads her to explore her new community and make immediate friends.

Willa has no agency in the decision to move to Troy; her mother and stepfather choose it for her. Her sense that she lacks a voice becomes a central theme of her story. On her first day in Troy, Willa meets three young girls who want to build a clubhouse, though the city is refusing to hear their proposal. Willa reads books about the struggles women go through to have their voices heard, and her parents begin to teach her about the women who have been important in shaping history, but who are not always remembered.

Each chapter begins with a thought-provoking quote related to Willa's struggles, words that may spark the interest of sympathetic young readers. As Willa settles into Troy, she learns that she does have a voice, and that it is strong. The clubhouse girls she works to help develop their own cheer: "Don't roar like a lion; Roar like a girl. How's a girl roar? Heart Smart and loud Proud."

Willa is likable, and she benefits from the friendly and fair people around her. Whether or not her circumstances are realistic, they are pleasant to read about, and the lessons waiting for young readers in *Roar Like a Girl* are powerful.

CATHERINE THURESON (Fall 2016)

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