

Sally Loves . . . Skateboarding

Jody Mackey

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Adventurous young Sally eschews norms to try something new—skateboarding with her brother's friends—in this charming addition to the series.

Jody Mackey encourages girls to try new things in her series of motivational Sally Loves books. In *Sally Loves ... Skateboarding*, Sally experiences the shy hesitations of an early crush while discovering her talent in a sport. A carefree plot highlights the encouragement of family and friends and the empowering nature of success.

Sally—a writer with a loving family—admires her older brother, Ryan, who regularly skateboards. She accepts an invitation to skate with his friends but realizes that she needs to learn how to skate first. She later joins the friends at the skate park. Along the way, she receives her mother's advice on working hard toward her dreams—and takes notice of Seth, one of the skaters.

Such everyday encounters model a healthy sibling friendship. Ryan is inclusive and helpful. Sally enjoys his company. The plot, however, is tension-free, and the book's message on reaching goals is weakened by the compressed learning curve. After "only a few falls on the grass," Sally appears to master skateboarding moves readily. She also fits in with her brother's group, never once meeting resistance—implicit or otherwise—despite the likelihood that their different ages would result in different social needs and expectations.

As lucid as the story is, its audience is less defined. The work is packaged as a picture book, with appealing pink flourishes, a large format, easy vocabulary, and full-color art, but the content is better suited to a middle grade novel. Sally is drawn as a preteen and behaves as such, expressing typical concerns such as over what to wear. Her encounters are framed with appropriate innocence, but she notices details that fall outside of the picture book age range: the scent of her crush when she's seated next to him, for example. She acknowledges that she could easily watch him "skate forever."

The writing tends toward the charmed, portraying a home that is "perfect in almost every way." A pastel environment includes swaying trees and background details like butterflies and stuffed animals. The quiet style fits Sally's personality, which seeks the make-believe world in books. There's a potentially intriguing contrast between her sheltered dreaminess and the hard ramps and walls at the skate park, but little is made of the park's waiting-to-be-mined metaphor on overcoming obstacles, whether in subtext or in the illustrations.

Adding to her growing list of skills—swimming, dancing, and riding horses have previously been featured—Sally emerges as an optimistic girl who is willing to explore. It's satisfying that in this outing, she branches into a less traditional pursuit, proving that girls are strong skaters too.

KAREN RIGBY (December 20, 2018)

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