ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

The Education of Queenie McBride
Lyndsey D'Arcangelo
Publishing Syndicate
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Lyndsey D'Arcangelo's young adult novel *The Education of Queenie McBride* follows two teen lesbians from wildly different backgrounds as they search for acceptance—within themselves and the world around them.

Pudge is a fourteen-year-old homeless teen whose parents kicked her out because she's gay. Readers meet her when she's begging for change outside a McDonalds, no longer living up to her moniker. Teen readers will feel heartbreak as she longs to go home and regain her parents' love.

Queenie is a college freshman at Boston University. At the beginning she's a petulant teen, struggling to resist the destructive fun of college life. She's used to forging her own way, but she's coming up short on self-confidence for the first time. Her dilemma will resonate with teens who've faced the uncertainty of starting over in a new environment. With each page she increasingly understands how much she's depended on her parents for her supposedly self-made success.

A late night encounter on the streets of downtown Boston and a shared a meal at Burger King brings these two into an unlikely relationship. Queenie ventures from guilt to responsibility to genuine care as she forges a friendship with Pudge. Teen readers will be engaged in the story as they watch Queenie and Pudge grow, change, and learn to trust each other—Queenie even risks jail for Pudge.

The characters ride the line of cliché but almost always stay on the right side. Queenie and Pudge each have the self-conscious, slightly self-focused voices that resonate so well with teens.

Occasionally d'Arcangelo's writing feels a bit self-indulgent, but even then she has the audience in mind, using just the kind of slight adjectival overload that appeals to teens: for example, "For the first time in her mouthy life, Queenie had been at a loss for words."

Although sexuality is at the heart of the characters' struggles, the story is about friendships rather than romance, making it wholly teen appropriate. D'Arcangelo supports teens

as they work to form a positive identity for themselves. While the book will have particular appeal for lesbian teens, its themes reach across gender and sexuality. The story explores the things nearly all teens take for granted, like family and education and even food.

D'Arcangelo's novel is a compelling, multifaceted look at the pertinent questions of sexual and human identity that teens face as they grow into adulthood.

Melissa Wuske