

The Face You See

Amelia Legend

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In swift and relatable prose, The Face You See juggles the many difficult topics and circumstances that young adults face.

Amelia Legend's *The Face You See* is a dramatic young adult romance novel in which two teens must navigate the many things left unsaid if they wish to find themselves together.

Danielle is a high school senior with a small and cherished group of friends and an uncertain handle on what she wants in the future. She moves through school trying not to attract attention—an impossibility, whether she knows it or not, because beautiful enigmas always do. Fresh from the farmlands of Kansas, Reed notices her—and falls quickly in love—but a less trustworthy pair of eyes follow her too, and may threaten her tenuous new happiness.

Beyond this love story are topics both hefty and important for teenage audiences. Dannie has to grapple with the socially destructive lies of an ex-boyfriend in addition to a home life so fraught it is hardly livable. She holds her secrets close, but she also longs to air them and let Reed in. Their sweet relationship develops at a slow pace, marked by continual mutual respect, making them somewhat of a model for those seeking healthy romances.

The novel's prose is very consumable and makes liberal use of youthful dialect, particularly of the internal, introspective kind, as well as of text-talk. Sometimes Dannie and Reed's thoughts are too reliant on slang—those beyond a certain age will have to go to the Internet to discern the meaning of DTR and bee-see—and cultural references may date the work. A time or two, Dannie and Reed break the fourth wall and address their audience directly, which can be a distraction. Sudden dramatic narrative turns may strain credulity, particularly Dannie's almost Cinderella twist in home circumstances, but are worth working through for those who identify with this thoughtful and vulnerable heroine.

But these tendencies and flaws are also frequently charming. Dannie and Reed second-guess themselves a lot, capturing the growing period between high school and adulthood well. They work through confusing topics nimbly: What is safe behavior at a high school party? When should a couple move past just kissing? What comes after you receive your diploma? How do you respond to devastating situations? Not all teens will agree with their conclusions, but their process of arriving at answers is sympathetic and well worth engaging with.

In swift and relatable prose, *The Face You See* juggles the many difficult topics and circumstances that young adults face, making it a sympathetic opening to a new young adult romance series.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (April 19, 2016)

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