



The Properties of Water

Hannah Roberts McKinnon

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When Lace's older sister, Marni, falls victim to a summer swimming accident, it paralyzes Lace in time. For Lace, there is only a before--can there be an after? But as the summer surges on, she learns that she must return to the water, the very thing that tore her family apart. This beautifully crafted novel explores the boundaries of family and friendship, the greatest griefs that knock us down, and the smallest kindnesses that guide us to safe harbors.

The Properties of Water Details

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Author : Hannah Roberts McKinnon

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From Reader Review The Properties of Water for online ebook

Diane Carrozzo says

I really enjoyed this book! It deals with the feelings a young girl has after her sister has a terrible accident. It also explores friendships, boy/girl feelings, jealousy, insecurities....I could go on and on because I felt everything about this book was realistic and valid. I also like this book because it incorporated a bit of mystery. First, you don't truly know what happened to the sister until close to the end of the book. Second, there is a character who is mysterious to the protagonist and even seen as a threat to her family. For all these reasons, I liked reading the book for myself, but even more, I can't wait to introduce it to my 7th graders. I will promote this book as both contemporary, realistic fiction AND as a mystery. My hope is that they will like it too, and perhaps promote more reading in their own lives.

Sara D. says

This story is very touching. I loved the imagery- you could feel the lake water lapping at your toes. Lace's response to her sister's tragedy was heartfelt and moving. I only wish more YA books were this pure, without the commercial junk. A tender, well written read.

Zoë Danielle says

"Growing up on this lake, Marni used to say it was in our blood."

The Properties of Water by Hannah Roberts McKinnon tells the story of a young girl named Lace, whose older sister Marni is harmed in a swimming accident, changing both of their lives forever. Lace and Marni grew up on a lake, but Lace finds herself paralyzed by the idea of returning to the water. Even more scary than swimming is the idea of visiting Marni and accepting what has happened to her.

There were a few minor but odd things that bothered me about the book. One example is that it is never really clear why Lace is called Lace, when her first name is Amelia. Granted, Lace is a nickname of her middle name Wallace- but why does she go by that instead of Amelia? It felt strange to have McKinnon introduce the fact that the main character's name was Amelia, but then not have her called that. Also, despite the acknowledgments indicating that McKinnon consulted with doctors on the medical aspect of the story, I was a little unclear on how realistic that portion was although I won't discuss it further in order to avoid spoilers.

Despite these minor complaints, The Properties of Water is a heartbreaking and well written novel, and McKinnon is clearly comfortable inside the mind of a young girl as Lace is an extremely believable main character. The relationship between Marni and Lace, as seen through Lace's eyes, is also very genuine as Lace both admires and envies her talented older sister. My favourite character was probably Willa Dodge, the woman who moves in with Lace and her father to help take care of the house while her sister and mother are away. Willa is a fabulous cook, but Lace doesn't trust her, thinking she is keeping a secret. The storyline of Lace and her best friend Beth Ann try to figure out what Willa is hiding was cute and well done, and definitely the sort of spying a kid would do when a stranger moves into their lives. Lace's grandparents, especially her grandmother, are also charmingly well crafted and McKinnon gives each character their own

unique quirk which makes each of them memorable in the mind of the reader.

The story itself is pretty simple, but the way McKinnon tells it is both smooth and rich. The best part of *The Properties of Water* is how well it deals with overcoming grief through the perspective of a young girl. Even though the novel is suitable for younger readers, she doesn't sacrifice writing or description for their sake, capturing beautiful and tragic moments. In one example, she writes:

"He sinks on the bench beside me, and we sit, shoulder to shoulder, like two battered bookends holding up all the sadness in the world. This time I put my arm around him, and Cinder wedges under the bench beneath us, his black fur collecting our tears like gemstones."

The book itself is really short, but despite that it is filled to the brim with emotion. *The Properties of Water* is a touching story, and it is a perfect book for a young reader of around 12 years old, but it still offers a heart-warming story for older readers who feel inclined to pick it up, as they will certainly appreciate the skill of McKinnon's writing.

Tasha says

For Lace, the lake she has grown up living on has been an integral part of her childhood and her life. All of the seasons of the lake, as well as the sounds and smells of it, are the background to her days. When her older sister, Marni, is injured jumping into the lake from a height, Lace is unable to return to her beloved lake or even to the city's swimming pool. Lace works to continue having some order to her life, but her mother is hours away caring for her sister, her father is grieving himself, and her grandparents dart in and out of her summer. There is the new family care giver, Willa Dodge, but Lace sees her as an invader and perhaps even a thief. One happy part of her summer is that an older boy is paying attention to her. As Lace faces her first summer without her older sister, she begins to realize that everything has changed and she can do very little to repair any of it.

Written with a clear voice, this book has lustrous prose that makes Lace's struggles come beautifully to life.

To show the author's skill with words, I have to share one passage, though there were many to choose from:

He sinks on the bench beside me, and we sit, shoulder to shoulder, like two battered bookends holding up all the sadness in the world. This time I put my arm around him, and Cinder wedges under the bench beneath us, his black fur collecting our tears like gemstones.

This is a book about grief and the horrible time when grieving seems like the wrong thing to be doing, but forward motion is impossible too. It is the story of a loving, devoted family torn apart by an accident. It is Lace's story and the lake's story. It is about the power of nature, the horror of brain injury, and the healing powers of time and love (as well as a great dog).

This very short book by today's standards is a small jewel. It is dazzling as it shows emotions so thoroughly that it is like readers are experiencing it themselves. Her prose is deep and radiant, but never leaves a young reader puzzling. Rather her images are taken straight from the world of the lake, of summer and of sadness.

Highly recommended, this book is a great choice for tweens who will understand everything that Lace is feeling. Appropriate for ages 11-13.

Janie says

I quickly became sucked into this story, just as the lake seems to suffuse all of the family and friends involved in this coming of age story. This book felt so honest to me. I expected it to be sad, and it was. But it was not tragic, or depressing, or scary. Instead, it was hopeful and moving. I loved Lace and Marni, the two sisters. They went through so much, and the story flashes back and forth before the accident and after, so you get a solid sense of their deep relationship. I was surprised by how funny it was at times. Her writing is liquid- so fluid and effortless, and really quite beautiful at times. I am buying a set for my fifth grade class for a holiday gift, thanks to some PTA donations. A gorgeous little gift of a book!

Courtney Tucker says

The properties of Water, by Hannah Roberts McKinnon is a great book for young teens to read because it is easy to connect to the main character. The events in the story are similar to events that a teenager in real life might encounter and endure. For instance, fighting with your parents, siblings and hanging out with your friends. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone because it pulls your heart strings and you get very attached to the characters that you are reading about because the author makes them seem very real. In this book, Marni is very sad that her most and sister just pack up and leave their home. Although this book is short, it is filled with emotion, action, a good size of heart break.

Alan says

ATOS Book Level: 4.3

Interest Level: Middle Grades (MG 4-8)

AR Points: 5.0

Lexile: 670

Word Count: 36803

This is the story of Lacey, and how she struggles to cope after tragedy strikes her older sister Marni. Lacey must come to grips with Marni's condition and letting go of the fear that Marni may blame her for not being there with her when it happened.

Robert says

Winner of Amazon's Best Book for November! Really, really great story. This author's writing is so lovely and poetic, it just conjures images of each carefully crafted scene. Her characters are pretty bold and pretty honest- they jump off the page and fully resonate the depth of their humor, sadness, and personal journeys. She tackle a serious issue- TBI- but it is handled gracefully and even with humor, as life marches forward. A great read for all kids, and parents, too.

Beth says

Best book I've read all year! Once again, McKinnon wrote a beautiful and heartbreaking story of family and friends struggling through a life changing experience. Lace lives in her older sister Marni's shadow. Marni is talented, beautiful, popular, and most of all a champion swimmer. The two live on a lake in Maine, and though they are close, Lace feels like second best. Until one tragic summer afternoon when everything changes. Suddenly, in one instant at the beach, she is left questioning who she is. Her hilarious best friend Beth Ann helps keep her moving forward, and laughing, but even their relationship is complicated by the attention of handsome swim captain Sully Tanner. But is he really interested in Lace? Or is there another reason he begins to develop a friendship with her. And who is Willa Dodge, the mysterious visitor who harbors a secret of her own? Lace's family and funny grandparents try to pull together, offering plenty of laughs and family craziness we can all relate to. But it's the imagery of the lake, the sadness within, and the strong pull of Lace's emotions that keep this book rolling with tears, laughter, and hope. This book deals with some serious issues and it handles them with grace and beauty. I have ordered copies for my whole fifth grade class. This book is in a class all by itself.

Maryanne says

I thought the cover looked a little haunting, but I loved the rich story inside. This family is really well put together and believable. I think the story was so touching and I had trouble putting it down- it was a quick but deep read. My 13 year old daughter is getting it next- I preview her books first- and I know she will love this. The sisters are adorable, inspiring and made me laugh and cry as I read this story. I recommend it highly.

Arti says

The Properties of Water. Probably one of the best school-made-me-read-it books I've ever read. :)

So the book is about Lace Martin, who's elder sister Marni had a pretty devastating accident and is put in the hospital in Portland, a long way away from Lace and her father. Lace and her dad are waiting for the day when Marni and her mother will come home because it's been a while. But they cant handle the house by themselves, so they hire a housekeeper, Will Dodge, a unusual woman who is extremely secretive and Lace starts to get suspicious.

Lace's sister Marni was a swimmer. And a very good swimmer too. She was the popular girl who had tons of friends, all the boys liked her, and she spent time with her little sister. After the accident, Lace hasn't been in the water since but still goes to the pool with her best friend, Beth Ann and watches her swim. To the fact that Marni and Lace were close, Marni's friends still talk to Lace, wave hello, etc. One of Marni's friends, Sully Tanner (SPOILER: MARNI'S SECRET BOYFRIEND) starts hanging out with Lace more and more until one day, Lace finds out the secret Marni had wanted to tell her, but never had the chance too.

So the whole story is about Lace, who struggles to sort out her life, still unstable by the fact that her sister almost died and is now miles away in a hospital in Portland.

It was a cute book. I loved the ending how everything ended up happily ever after. And Beth Ann. She was awesome! The way she splashed Jade. Oh so cool. And a good thing is also that the book was funny and not dead serious and tragic the whole time.

I loved this one

Ryan says

By the end of the first page, I knew something terrible had happened but that, in spite of the horrible thing, Lace's life had to go on, that she was trying to cope with the thing in the best way she could. There is a big, painful hole in Lace that I could feel and sometimes I wanted to cry. At the same time, there is beauty and life all around her and she isn't blind to it - just not completely prepared to be part of it. I loved Lace's descriptions of being close to her sister - that is how sisters often are, even when they are older and far away from each other. I also loved that the whole story floated on the lake that is such a big part of Lace's world - the words were almost a song, gentle and summery.

Kiki says

This book was really nice. It was sad, though. It was kind of confusing at first. I didn't really understand why Lace's mom and Marni left for Portland. But when I read more, I understood that Marni had gotten hurt and had to go for rehab in Portland. In the end, I thought the book was amazing.

Alyssa G. 5 says

The Properties of Water by Hannah Roberts McKinnion is told from a thirteen year old girl named Lace's point of view. Lace had a sister named Marni, and two loving parents. They live by a lake which is where Lace and Marni basically live. They go there everyday in the summer and are both on a swim team. Things were going just fine until one crazy summer. The accident that takes her mother and sister away for a while..... but no they did not die. Now it's just Lace and her dad but because her dad has to go to work, Willa Dodge a housekeeper comes to stay with them and help take care of things around the house as well as take care of Lace. This book follows Lace as she goes through a hard time without her sister, and how her best friend helps to cheer her up and let her spill her feelings out too. I would rate this book a five out of five stars. It was really good, and I like that the book was from a child's point of view. Most books you get the parent's side when they have had hard time with there kids, but this was different and I liked it. I can relate with her a little bit too, because my brother is serving a mission. He's only been gone for abut six months but it feels like he should be done with his two years already. The Author did a really nice job writing this book. I even just loved the idea of it. I would totally recommend this to anyone and everyone. Good going Hannah Roberts Mckinnion!

Vicki says

Great book! This was a new book found at my public libray. Hannah Roberts McKinnon handles the reaction of a sister who has to process a tragedy to her sibling. This story has a wonderful building of suspense. We don't find out what really happened to the older sister till the end. More importantly we go through the process of emotionally dealing with reality with the main character and the people around her. Good read.
