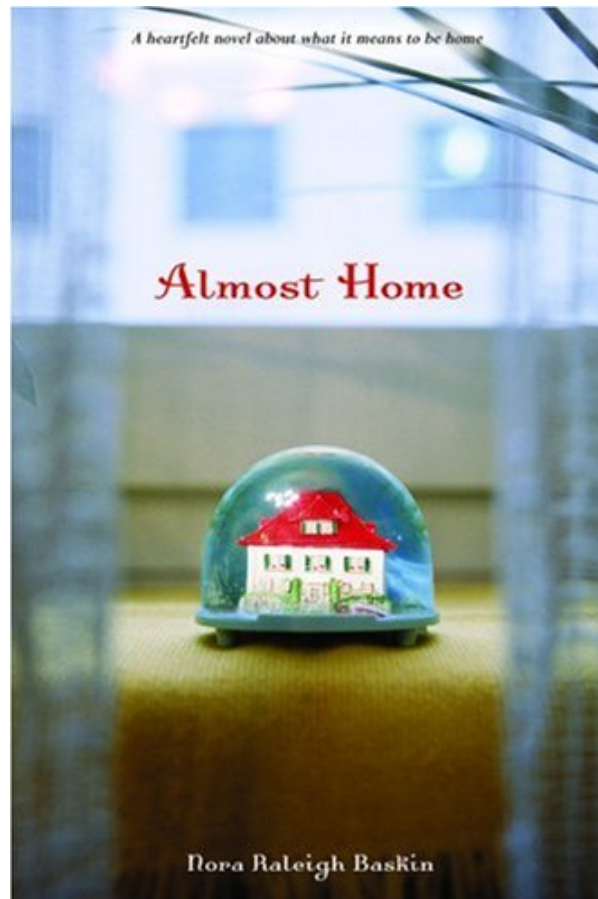


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From School Library Journal

Grade 4-6-Sixth-grader Leah's sense of self is badly shaken when she learns that her mother's weeks-long silence has been hiding a cross-country move that doesn't include her. The fact that her "mother" is actually her stepmother is only gradually revealed to readers. As Leah starts to let go of her bitterness, she makes tentative progress toward a solid relationship with her father and a restored sense of who she is. The strengths of the book are Leah's well-developed character and the realistic nastiness she displays as an outlet for her misery. Her inability to focus on schoolwork and her purposeful attempts to wound her father's new wife both help to capture the extent of her loss. The close friendship she forms with a boy is less convincing, given sixth-grade social norms. In addition, her father is drawn as a puzzlingly positive character, which seems at odds with her previous lack of relationship with him. Readers who enjoy quiet stories of personal growth will likely overlook these slightly implausible plot elements and respond to Leah's journey as she seeks a place to belong.

Faith Brautigam, Gail Borden Public Library, Elgin, IL

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From Booklist

Gr. 5-8. Sixth-grader Leah is stunned when she is suddenly thrust into her father and new stepmother Gail's life after her mother suddenly leaves. New in town, she's an outsider at school until Will throws her a lifeline and tries to be her friend. As the two lonely kids secretly explore the darkened auditorium to get away from the cafeteria crowd during their lunch period, they start to build a trusting relationship. At home, though, Leah's anger and feelings of abandonment make for difficulties with distant Dad and overcompensating Gail. Cautiously, Leah finally begins to confront all that has happened to her, and with Will's steadfast encouragement, she takes some positive steps: she tries out for a play and stands up to a girl who harasses her. Will's wisdom and manner belie his age, and Leah's growing strength and self-knowledge evolve a little too quickly as the story spins toward a happy ending; but the characters are very appealing, and the plot will hold readers' attention. Anne O'Malley

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About the Author

Nora Raleigh Baskin grew up in Brooklyn and New Paltz, New York. She lives in Connecticut with her husband and two sons.

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Leah Baer has been shuffled to and from various parents and households for years, and now she's back at her father's house with his new wife. This latest move seems as though it might be a lasting one, but Leah feels out of place both at home and at school. Then an unconventional boy named Will befriends Leah and persuades her to try acting to express her ideas and feelings. As Leah begins to learn more about herself, she also begins to see how she fits in her family members' lives, and gradually finds out what it means to be home. Nora Raleigh Baskin's stirring and heartfelt novel resonates with emotional truths.

- Sales Rank: #3573787 in Books
- Published on: 2005-09-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .50" w x 5.50" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 192 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

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Review of Almost Home

By A Customer

I really liked this book. I read it in one sitting, because I didn't want to put it down. I recommend this book to any girl around the age of 11 or 12. It is a really good plot with realistic characters. I really liked it.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Good book!

By Armchair Interviews

Leah's whole world has been turned upside down. She is suddenly living with her father and new stepmother while her sister and mother move across the country. She's the new kid in sixth grade and feels totally lost and alone. In her struggle, she lashes out at her stepmother, avoids others at school and retreats to a world of her own imagination. It is only when Will, another lonely student, reaches out to her that Leah is able to dream and stake a claim on her future.

Almost Home takes a hard look at what it means to be a family and what happens when that family is broken apart. As told through Leah's eyes, Nora Raleigh Baskin vividly captures the loneliness of divorce, yet provides some hope for the future.

Leah begins to find her own voice through the support of Will and a few kind words from a teacher. Leah's character is fully developed and written with honesty showing both her positive and sometimes nasty sides. By creating a believable character in Leah, young readers are able to relate and grow along with her. While some of the characters surrounding Leah are not as convincingly drawn, the focus remains on her thoughts and personal growth, and therefore does not hinder the feeling behind the story.

Armchair Interviews says: Almost Home is an honest portrayal of the difficulties of surviving a divorce and the tremendous growth that comes from discovering your own place in the world.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

GREATEST BOOK EVER

By alana

This book is great for tweens ages 9-14. I could easily relate to the main character Leah, and all her actions and emotions. Baskin really puts down in words what is going on in a 12 year old's head. I couldn't put the book down for a second IT WAS GREAT~I would read this book over and over again. If you love this book (like i do) i highly request reading her 1st book WHAT EVERY GIRL EXCEPT ME KNOWS, also.

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