



A Bird On Water Street

Elizabeth O. Dulemba

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A Bird on Water Street is a coming of age story about Jack, a boy growing up in a Southern Appalachian town environmentally devastated by a century of poor copper-mining practices and pollution. Jack is opposed to the mine where so many of his relatives have died, but how can he tell that to his Dad who wants him to follow in the family trade? Jack just wants his dad safe and the land returned to its pre-mining glory with trees, birds, frogs, and nature—like he’s learning about in school. After Jack’s uncle is killed in a mining accident and the Company implements a massive layoff, the union organizes and the miners go on strike. It seems Jack’s wish is coming true. But the cost may be the ruin of his home and everything he loves.

A Bird On Water Street Details

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Author : Elizabeth O. Dulemba

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From Reader Review A Bird On Water Street for online ebook

Kristen Luppino says

A wonderfully told tale of change, growing up and nature around an old copper mine near the Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina border. Jack's story is heartening.

Aneta Augustine says

I am nineteen years old. I've attended enough of social studies and environmental science classes to know all about how man kills nature. So when people talk about AVOID PLASTIC and PLANT MORE TREES and RUN THE ICE CAPS ARE MELTING, I yawn.

I expected this book to be another lecture (big mistake). So when I found myself listening to Jack talking about how "living on Coppertown was like living on the moon", how Miss Post taught them about trees and amphibians and birds when there weren't any, how the fog left holes in his mom's stockings hung out to dry, I kept listening.

But this book isn't all about how the mining industry in Coppertown killed all the birds. It's also about a fourteen year old boy dreaming about dirt bikes and crushing over his best friend's sister. About Friday music nights, fishing, breaking an arm over a dare, rubbing a rabbit's foot for luck, praying for his dad's safety in the mines, blackberry picking with his mom and best friend, agonizing over the fact that he didn't like the future his dad already decided for him.

The tone was nicely set – it wasn't dragging, it wasn't hurried, not too descriptive that it doesn't help the story along. I really liked Jack's voice. Some pages managed to pull me through and transport me to the tailings pond where he took home Little Man and next to Piran listening to the "chick-a-dees".

I loved Coppertown. Although it stands for something negative, Dulemba has managed to make me love it's people and the shy green.

DO NOT MISS OUT ON THE AUTHOR'S NOTE.

Nancy says

I learned so much reading this book. It's the kind of story that makes you want to reach out and read other information about a place/time, this one being the Copper-mining towns of Tennessee and what happened there after their boom.

I found it eerily relevant to today's atmosphere of climate destruction in the face of short-sighted greed. The main character often seemed younger than his stated age (14) which left me wondering if this was a regional/cultural thing. He just wasn't street savvy, and was a little too sweet. But maybe that's me comparing him to my own sass & vinegar 14 year old.

Kayla says

I liked this book I mean it had some ah ok things but lets talk about what I like about this book. First the writing and pictures and authors story is great. Second I love the way the book has a weird and sad connect to be and I don't know about you guess you will have to read the book and find out.

Annette (booknerderie) says

Hi, guys! *waves* So, y'all know that I don't like DNF'ing books but when a book isn't reaching you the way that it should, it begins to feel like a chore. That's how reading this book felt. I appreciate the sentiment- that humans are destroying nature- but *A Bird on Water Street* fell flat for me. The plot seemed a little scattered and didn't really flow that well. I kept waiting for something to happen, for something to latch on and tug at my heart strings...but...yeah...that didn't happen :/

I sure hope someone out there will love this and judging from the average ratings, people do love this.

Thanks to Netgalley for providing this ARC in exchange for an honest review

Rapunzel says

1.5 stars but DNF at 54%

I didn't finish this one, so I'm not going to log the rating, but it would have been 1.5 stars. I really didn't connect with this book - I found the 'clipped accent' voice ridiculously irritating, and the story lacked any flow whatsoever.

Though it tried to bring attention to an important idea - preserving nature - it was boring and bland, and there's other things I'd rather be reading right now.

Sarah Doubenmier says

Silas picked this out for me because there's a bird on the cover. It was a good historical fiction about a mining town and the effects on the environment.

Ann says

Jack loves his home. Why would anyone want to live anywhere other than Coppertown, a safe, warm place where he is surrounded by family and friends? Sure, there's illness that some people blame on the mine's dumping of chemicals, fear of mining accidents, and no one has seen a bird for years, but it's home. *A BIRD ON WATER STREET* explores the changes Jack and Coppertown undergo when the miners strike after an accident and big layoff.

Although the bigger picture of this book includes the downside of mining and how the countryside around Coppertown has been brutalized over the years, Jack's story stays front and center. His family, his crush on a friend's sister, the loss of his baseball team when so many teammates' families must move away to find work, Jack's fears that his own family might have to leave Coppertown... and beautifully, Jack's budding awareness of the ecosystem that is his home town and its surrounding hills.

Dulemba expertly weaves the strands of Coppertown's environmental, economic, and personal relationships and gives a life-affirming portrait of a Southern Appalachian town needing and ready for new life. Jack's story is set in the late 1980s, but could replicate the experience of countless miners' children in this country and the world, in the past century and the present.

And how wonderful to have a title that is not instantly "given away," but comes to mean more when the reader turns the book's last page.

Thùy Linh says

There're some little life lessons in the book which I found quite adorable. Dulemba's words is not very creative, but it's okay for a middle-age. Plot twist? Not really attractive.

Cathie Stumpenhaus says

This is a charming and fascinating story drawn from recent history. Delightful characters.

Heather Vieiro says

Thoughtful and atmospheric, this book is technically middle grade but there's plenty for older readers to sink their teeth into. This would be a great mother-daughter book club pick.

Janni says

I heard an early version this book's opening, and haven't forgotten it. Looking forward to reading the final version!

Hillary Homzie says

Set during the 1980s, the book chronicles the 8th grade year of Jack Hicks, who lives in Coppertown. The small copper mining town sits at the southern tip of the Appalachian mountains in a denuded area known as the Copper Basin. There is not a tree, a bug or a fish that lives in the area, and Jack, who does not want to be a miner like his father and grandfather before him, aims to change things.

There are so many gorgeous lines like "Coppertown sits in a bowl at the southern tip of the Appalachian Mountains" and the "Tohachee River cuts from the east to the west...like a zipper. I loved all of the names in this book that suggest something ominous will happen; you have Principal Slaughter and Grandpa's store is by Old Brawling Town Creek. I especially love how Dulemba contrasted the denuded landscape with the lush forest. When Jack Hicks, the main character, sees real trees (what a concept! after all, kids take trees for granted), he calls them "living sculptures" and contrasts the beauty to his "paperbag landscape." Dulemba did a great job with her first-person narration and Jack sounds like a real 13 (and then 14 year-old). I laughed out loud when he called it the "bird-crap tree."

Some of the most moving parts are when Jack tries to do something about his scarred world. I loved it when he plants a garden and gets excited about the tadpoles (a new thing-- as nothing obviously lives in Coppertown), and I cried for Jack when the frogs end up dead. Dulemba does a great job of setting this up. After all, she described the pond the frogs are in as "crusty silicate dust." But I love that she offered so much hope as well.

Terry says

It took me a little bit to get into the story, but I liked Jack Hicks and his friend Piran instantly. Having lived and gone to school in West Virginia, I could easily relate to the mining environment and Jack's questions about mining practices, environmental impact. Family dynamics were realistic (without being dysfunctional), and I appreciated Jack's dilemma of not wanting to go into the "family business."

Read about all of the pros at the Reading Tub. While you're there, add your review.

Cheryl says

What's not to like about Jack? Not a thing. I found the protagonist engaging and the story informative without being preachy. This is a solid good read for any middle grader.
