



Wind Blows Backward

By Mary Downing Hahn

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A high-school girl perseveres through a disturbing relationship; PW praised the "realistic empathy and deft style" of Hahn's "taut and emotionally driven story." Ages 12-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 9-12-- High school seniors Lauren and Spencer cling to one other in an insensitive world peopled by affluent, snobbish classmates and preoccupied adults. They had been middle school misfits, bonded by braces and a love of fantasy and science fiction. But time, different lifestyles, and peer pressure interfered. He became the "Prince of Jocks," while she remained an introverted loner. When he suddenly rekindles their friendship, Lauren is wary until she realizes that Spencer is deeply troubled and values the honesty and camaraderie they once shared. As their romance intensifies, he confides that he is haunted by his father's suicide and disturbed by his pretentious lifestyle and uncommunicative mother. Drunk and depressed on graduation night, he is nearly killed in a motorcycle accident. His physical, psychological, and emotional healing begins with devoted Lauren by his side. The couple confronts modern perils of youth--sex, alcohol, and suicide--with little adult intervention. Lauren's divorced mother is sympathetic but distracted by her own romantic involvement. Spencer's mother and stepfather are more concerned with social appearances than reality. Mr. Walker, their English teacher, dismisses the young man's poetic perception of death as plagiarism. Stereotype characters abound; and, the nearly tragic climax is a long time coming. Nonetheless, YA readers will identify with the pressures, conflicts, and concerns facing these teens. And, poetry fans will enjoy excerpts from Keats and Whitman. --Gerry Larson, Chewing Junior High School, Durham, NC
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From Kirkus Reviews

A reliable author whose range extends from ghost stories to the O'Dell Award *Stepping on the Cracks* (1991) offers a YA novel whose outline is the stuff of adolescent fantasy: After ignoring mousy Lauren since middle school (when they were shy kindred spirits), rich, handsome Spencer suddenly abandons his latest popular girlfriend in senior year and turns to Lauren as the only one who's ever understood him. Built on shared interests (especially poetry) and the alienation both feel from their parents, their renewed friendship quickly blossoms into love, ardently physical but not strong enough to dispel Spencer's frighteningly bleak moods. After graduation, Lauren's fears are realized when Spencer takes a suicidal motorcycle ride; he spends weeks in critical condition, but Lauren's loyalty helps pull him through. Hahn gives Spencer a solid reason for his angst (at six, he found his dad's body after he shot himself, but never told anyone). The subtlety here is not in the events or the assigned roles (Lauren's self-centered--albeit good-hearted--single mom has slept around; Spencer's uptight mother is coldly demanding) but in the careful character development and skillful interweaving of motifs--the poetry of love and death; telling lines from children's books, which take on double meanings for these troubled teens, who are still playful in their joyful moments; balloons, those potent symbols of freedom, loss, or escape. Easily read and enjoyed but also thoughtful: a book with unusual texture and depth. (Fiction. YA) -- *Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kristen Hamilton:

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