



A Sense of the Infinite

Hilary T. Smith

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It's senior year of high school, and Annabeth is ready—ready for everything she and her best friend, Noe, have been planning and dreaming. But there are some things Annabeth isn't prepared for, like the constant presence of Noe's new boyfriend. Like how her relationship with her mom is wearing and fraying. And like the way the secret she's been keeping hidden deep inside her for years has started clawing at her insides, making it hard to eat or even breathe.

But most especially, she isn't prepared to lose Noe.

For years, Noe has anchored Annabeth and set their joint path. Now Noe is drifting in another direction, making new plans and dreams that don't involve Annabeth. Without Noe's constant companionship, Annabeth's world begins to crumble. But as a chain of events pulls Annabeth further and further away from Noe, she finds herself closer and closer to discovering who she's really meant to be—with her best friend or without.

A Sense of the Infinite Details

Date : Published May 19th 2015 by Katherine Tegen Books

ISBN : 9780062184733

Author : Hilary T. Smith

Format : ebook 400 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Fiction, Realistic Fiction

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From Reader Review A Sense of the Infinite for online ebook

Jen says

4 stars

I read Hilary T. Smith's *Wild Awake* last year and fell absolutely in love. Smith's writing style is truly beautiful and the subject matter that is in *Wild Awake* is extremely powerfully written. After finishing that book, I knew I would read anything she wrote. When *A Sense of the Infinite* fell into my hands, I dove right in. From page one, I was hit full-force with Smith's gorgeous writing style once again. *A Sense of the Infinite* is a satisfying sophomore novel from Smith.

A Sense of the Infinite tells the story of Annabeth Schultz, a girl without a father. A girl whose father raped her mother and left promptly afterwards. She is the product of a monster. The story surrounds Annabeth's struggle with self-discovery and friendship with Noe, her best friend. From the start, Smith sets up Annabeth's friendship with Noe very genuinely. In just a few short chapters, Smith made me believe that Annabeth and Noe are the best of friends, inseparable. Smith's impeccable writing builds up the friendship really well, forming a strong foundation for the rest of the story.

A lot of things happen in *A Sense of the Infinite* that forces Annabeth to reevaluate her life choices and who to surround herself with. I don't want to spoil anything, but I have to say that some of the plot events are a little random, and seemed haphazardly placed in the story. Towards the end, the story lost my attention a bit. The characterization throughout is still enjoyable, but the story itself became a little wonky. I feel that Smith didn't have to include those events to make the story stand out; it is already beautiful as it is. The ending is open-ended and I wish that I had gotten more closure on Annabeth and her future.

A Sense of the Infinite is not quite as impressive as *Wild Awake* simply because the plot points are a little shaky and they get quirky – almost as if they are asking for your full attention – towards the end, but the writing style and characterization is skillfully done nonetheless. I'll continue to look forward to Smith's books in the future.

Check out this review and more at Books and Other Happy Ever Afters

ExLibris_Kate says

Annabeth lives for her friend Noe because, in many ways, Annabeth hates herself. The easiest way to escape that hatred is to throw her life into someone else's and Noe's larger-than-life personality was an easy escape. Annabeth's struggles and the emotional weight she shoulders is below the radar of the adults in her life, which was absolutely heartbreaking. When the friendship inevitably sidetracks, and Noe changes her mind about college, and life in general, Annabeth starts to unravel. This happens all the time in books, of course, but I feel like I see it more often in the context of romantic relationships. It was nice/interesting to see a friendship under this microscope. I also want to mention Annabeth's cousin, who was really the catalyst for Annabeth's terrible realization, but who is able to redeem herself later. I loved her little redemption story because I love the idea that we grow and change for the better. It was a mini-reflection of Annabeth's own growth and change, as well. It also illustrated the messiness and support that makes up families, which was an aspect of the book I really appreciated.

There are a lot of heavy subjects in this book; rape, suicide, abortion, and eating disorders, to name a few. Yet, the author takes these tough subjects and brings them down off of the Issues pedestal and makes it a part of the characters rather than giving a name to each issue and calling it a character, if that makes sense. Loren, Ava, Steve, and Noe all fit into the puzzle that is Annabeth and they truly enhanced the story. *A Sense of the Infinite* humanizes subjects that are so often seen in strictly black and white terms and gives them depth and consideration. With all of the change and pain that Annabeth is going through, I really saw this book as a story about identity. Are you defined by your friends? Your family? Your background? Your interests? It resonated with me because these are questions you never stop asking yourself. *A Sense of the Infinite* could be described as quiet, but I think it's a book that should be widely read. It reflects the wide range of challenges that people actually face in adolescence and beyond. I felt for Annabeth, but by the end, I had hope for her, too.

Pinky says

This book hit me hard with the feels, I think I need to read more *Maid-Sama* after this review because I feel so broken down right now. There were so many things about this book that was painfully similar to the things that I went through during grades 1-8, regarding friendship. Ever since I was a kid, I was always the third wheel, the one who was left out. It was so hard to be happy in school and keep my grades up because I just wanted to have friends who would treat me as an equal. But no one seemed to want to do that. It would always be two best friends and me, a follower. People would always refer to me as a follower. If the two best friends got into a fight, I would always be the one who has to either solve the problem, or pick a side. It was so difficult to live like that, and I am so glad it is over.

I remember going into middle school in grade 7 and thinking that I want it all to be over, I want someone to be friends with me and think of me as an equal and not a follower. I hated feeling left out and it felt like most of my life was lived that way. And I met a huge group of friends in the end and it was great. I never meant to keep any grudges but eventually my huge group of friends fell apart one by one. All of my friends were nice and most of the time, no one was left out. By the time it was grade 8, I was promising myself that I wanted a drama-free year and have as much fun as possible. Since we were all moving onto high school, I wanted to have the best memories possible.

But that is not how it went, my year was okay, but I started noticing that I was left out again. In my group of friends, everyone had a very close friend. None of my friends thought of me as a close, close friend... But I didn't really care because the year was ending and we were moving on with our lives. Even though that, I still felt super hurt because there was always a time where I would hear whispering and laughing and I wouldn't know what was going on.

On the last day of school, my friends and me got into a mini argument/ fight. It was because of the fact that I had to stay in school to clean my braces off and everyone else wanted to go to a park and have a bunch of fun. I was fine with them going but I said I might be a little late. Everyone left me except one person. We were both eating lunch, awkwardly at the cafeteria, and when we got to the park, my friends decided to give me dirty looks and talk about me right in front of my face. This might not make sense to you, and I still can't believe it happened because of my braces. I was really hurt because I thought people would want to spend their last day with their close friends and enjoy the last day. After that, I got a bunch of emails from one of my friends and it was so mean, I cried. Then, another friend excluded me from picking up friends from graduation. And the other two just quietly sat there watching the whole thing. I sent them all letters or contacted them a few days after we graduated and had the courage to tell them how they made me feel. They

all apologized and I am still friends with some of them til this day. But I am still haunted by my past.

Ever since this experience, I was super picky when it came to meeting new friends. Whenever I met a new friend, I made sure that I wouldn't be too close with them. I avoided making close friends because it was not only a distraction, but another way to get hurt. Later on, I met up with a girl from my middle school who I didn't talk to often, and she and I are super close. She made me rethink my thoughts of having close friends. She was trust-worthy and always has my back. If someone were to hurt me, she would probably be the first person to stand up and stop them. We have each other and treat each other as equals. She was the reason of why I started writing reviews on Goodreads. And I am so glad to have met her. (This is getting a little cheesy so let's move on)

The reason behind why I am telling this story is because I felt exactly how Annabeth did in this story. The way the author used words to describe Annabeth's feelings was beautiful and heart-breaking. It was so hard to read this book because it was like I was revisiting my past and a stone was thrown into my stomach. I felt hurt all over again and a bunch of memories flooded into my head. (This book's main focus isn't friendship though, it is character development.)

“My outstretched arms found hers, and I was home.”

This book is another book I had to read for White Pine and it is about a girl named Annabeth. She is best friends with a girl named Noe. But recently, their friendship started falling apart and Annabeth feels like Noe is slowly leaving her. Noe has her boyfriend Steven by her side, a bunch of cool friends and has an awesome future ahead of her. Annabeth has a haunting past, a bunch of secrets and does not know where she is going with her life. Annabeth does not know what she will do without Noe.

Life keeps on changing. You don't get one chance at friendship, or one chance at love. Things die. Things grow. It's hard to see that when you've only been around for seventeen years, and you've only ever had one of everything, but it's true.”

This book was something that I felt strongly connected to. There were so many things that I could agree on but there were also parts where I was like, **WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!** I felt like I mainly connected to the friendship aspect of this book. Even though it wasn't the main focus, it affected me in different ways. I really loved the way Annabeth dealt with everything.

The characters were also amazing. I loved Steven, he was awesome and I hated the things he had to go through because he deserved so much better! He is hilarious and smart and everything about him was amazing! Annabeth was a good character but I hated the choices that she made and how she depended on Noe. Annabeth made me feel really frustrated but I felt bad for her all at once. But I could see why she did the things she did. Win is also awesome! I was not a huge fan of Noe though.

This is what Noe would say to one of her friends when she is done with them...:

The feels in the book were attacking me like waves:

The pacing of this book was fast and it is a really addicting read. I couldn't stop, it was so good, it was just so interesting and I couldn't wait to see what happened next. Even though it hurt to keep reading, it was worth it and I still loved it. The character development was amazing and is one of the biggest parts in this book.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants a book that hits them hard with the feels. Anyone who wants a fast-paced contemporary read, with a bunch of heart-breaking moments would love this book. Or anyone who wants something different and unique, you can try this one out! I shall go and weep in my bed while reading manga now..

Kaitlin (Next Page Please!) says

Gahhh! This book was so so so good. I loved the story and the characters and just how beautiful Hilary's writing was. It just showed a great example of how much life can change due to a few people and events. Definitely recommend this one for people who enjoy contemporaries.

Annabeth was such an interesting character to read from. With her and Noe, it was one of the Since You've Been Gone situations where the protagonist is able to find out who they really are because they don't have their best friend with them. That's what's really funny about these situations. Is that I'm not sure whether Noe was a good thing for Annabeth. Annabeth had a friend and someone to be social with but she also stuck too close with Noe. There were activities that Noe had dragged Annabeth into and Annabeth did everything Noe did because Annabeth just didn't know that what she wanted. Noe dragged Annabeth into so many things to the point where they finally just fell apart and I see that as a good thing. You're never going to find yourself if your life is being led by someone else and you don't make your own decisions. When Annabeth lived her life without Noe, she was finally finding herself and learning who she was. I saw Annabeth as someone who was a great friend, someone you could talk to. I think the growth that she went through in this book really changed her and made her into a better person and it was really great to see such development.

I loved the plot of this book, not as much as the characters though. I thought the plot was able to show what change in life looks like. It also perfectly captured the way people and small events can change your life and a person. The events that happened in this book are very realistic as well. Dealing with an absent parent, figuring out college, fall out with friends, breakup, and more. It all made Annabeth figure out who she was, meet new people, and gain knowledge from these experiences. Hilary's writing was also so great because she described what was happening in the book in such a great way. This book is definitely going to be remembered by me.

I gave this book 5 stars because I loved the characters and the plot was so well written.

Full review: <http://next-page-please.blogspot.com/...>

Kate says

I read this book in one day because I could not put it down. There are a lot of trigger topics in this book-eating disorders, abortion, rape, suicide, depression, but the book never feels like an issues book. It feels like real life. The only thing I can possibly criticize is that in the arc copy I read it was hard to tell who was saying what in the text conversations, but I'm sure that will be fixed by the time the book is released.

I read and loved the author's first book, Wild Awake, and this book definitely captured the same feel that I

loved in WA. I wasn't even that sure I wanted to read this one based on the summary, but I thought that about Wild Awake too. There is just something magical about the writing and characters and the way Smith addresses subjects few YA authors touch on. Giving a shout out to Miranda Kenneally, who also isn't afraid to write about tough subjects. Both authors manage to do it without ever making it feel like an After School Special.

Annabeth is an amazing character, at times she's frustrating (especially when around Noe) and other times she's inspiring and completely relatable. The supporting characters are also wonderful, from Steven to Ava, from Loren to Win- even their small rolls flash brilliantly across the page.

And then there's Noe. Charismatic, talented, authoritative, charming, careless Noe. I wanted to dislike her, and at times I did, but I also felt so sad for her and the life she has ahead of her.

There is no happy, shiny ending. The future is still unknown, but there is hope for some of the characters. I wish them well, and I'm going to miss them.

Kelly says

This book is phenomenal. It's quiet -- a powerful quiet. It grabs you bit by bit until it has your entire heart.

It's a story about friendship, about the evolution of relationships and people. The writing is knock-you-out beautiful, thoughtful, painful, and hopeful.

It features gymnastics, the outdoors, exploration. Finding your path and your destiny, with or without, a best friend at your side. It's about what does and does not a friendship make. About how growing up at any age means changes that are hard, changes that hurt, and changes that inspire excitement.

May be one of my all-time favorite YA novels. It ticked every single one of my boxes.

Humaira says

A beautiful and quiet story.

Shows friendship, love and hate at its deepest.

A sweet story of hanging on or letting go.

A story of finding yourself, being yourself and loving yourself!

Ashley (Loves Books) says

A version of this review will post to Ashley Loves Books at a later date.

There's a certain rawness to Hilary T. Smith's writing, a certain grittiness and reality to all her words and situations. I thought it was phenomenal in her first novel, and while her second one wasn't as high up there with me...A Sense of the Infinite really did deliver everything I'd hoped and expected for her follow up book.

Annabeth and Noe made me sad. It felt like it was a great friendship in the past, but it definitely was not worth it as it went on. Noe treated her poorly—though the reason and slow detriment of the friendship was actually quite realistic and sensible – and I just wanted Annabeth to be able to stand on her own. Their friendship reminded me of that quote about how in a relationship there's always someone who loves the other more; and while this one is about friendship, it translates the same. Annabeth was devoted to the point of pathetic, and it made me flinch every time she and Noe were on the same page.

There were a lot of issues tackled in this book – depression, family tragedies, teen pregnancy, eating disorders...the list continues on. And while I think they were handled well, the sheer quantity made the entire novel a little bit scattered and unfocused. I felt like every 20 pages I was encountering something entirely different, and if I wasn't paying attention as the pages went by, I would entirely miss a new topic or teen issue being brought up.

However, Hilary Smith still remains able to create some of the most realistic, relatable characters. While Annabeth made me feel a whole range of emotions (most of them kind of sad, honestly), there is a distinct tone and humanity to her that makes her seem so...completely real and just like every one of us. She's whiny and sad and hopeful and naïve and so scarred, and I just...it's baffling how much I really felt like Annabeth was a whole representation of that entire stage of life.

A Sense of the Infinite didn't quite hit me as much as Wild Awake did, but it was still phenomenal and made me connect with it.

Michelle Wrona says

This review can also be found on A Thousand Lives Lived, check it out for more reviews!

What's the best and most powerful thing in the world? L-O-V-E! And what does love have to do with? Friendship. Smith's A Sense of the Infinite is truly one of the most meaningful sisterhood stories that have touched my heart since Ann Brashares' *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*. Except in this case, the story deals with a much broader subject matter, and I found myself loving it much more than a typical contemporary.

To be honest, this story all captivated me after I saw the cover, and I immediately knew that this would be that perfect summer read that will get me thinking about life and what really happens to you or to a young teenager when her life is turned upside-down, and she has nobody to talk to and seek advice with. **This is your answer.** I adored this inside and out, though seeing it as a quick, light read probably made me enjoy it even more without having to get too much into it—which I did. I felt all of the emotions that Annabeth feels constantly, and I wanted to be there by her side. **She wasn't just a character, she was a young girl stuck in the worst possible situation for her time**, and if I told you, it sure would be a spoiler.

"I was not a girl in a TV show. I'd made my decision in the seconds it took me to throw up in a garbage can. There was no going back and forth. No waiting for the decision to appear like a package in the mail. It just landed there, thud. It was strange to be so certain. You were supposed to agonize. What did it mean that I wasn't agonizing?" (Hardcover, page 149)

Noe and Annabeth have been best friends since freshman year when they met in the best possible way. It's senior year, and things are actually beginning to *fall apart* in their friendship. Annabeth is afraid of growing apart from the girl who knows and understands her completely, but others argue and believe that she's too attached to her best friend. What happens when the worst possible scenario strikes your life, and you've got no one to talk about it with? Isn't **that the time when you need your best friend?**

It certainly is. It most positively absolutely is. Family also is a huge issue discovered by Smith's writing, especially the relationship between Annabeth and her mother. After Annabeth discovers **what's happening in her life**, she doesn't have Noe, she doesn't have a boyfriend, or any other close friends. She seeks out to her cousin, who thankfully helps her (Ava rules) but realizes that she needs to tell her mother. Imagine the kind of lie that would explode if she hadn't told her at all? *The book would've turned into a complete glitch of Annabeth having to deal with her life problem, and trying to gain a better relationship with her mother.* Girl power, yes.

What most struck me to the heart was the fact that Annabeth **was an independent young girl who doesn't need a man by her side**. I bet that 95% of the books that young adults read today are all incorporated with some romance. Sure, I adore the feeling of having a new fictional boyfriend in my eyes, but I do believe in change and diversity in authors' writing, and this surely is the case. We obviously did have a reencounter of some hook-up at the start of the novel between Annabeth and... Oliver. This led to the probably, evidently, but she didn't need him to rely on and him to solve all of the problems and difficulties in her life. (In fact, he was a total loser. But, I won't get into that really since it'll spoil the whole novel.) So romance? Uncheck, but for a total good reason.

"Annabeth, honey, life keeps on changing. You don't get one chance at friendship, or one chance at love. Things die. Things grow. It's hard to see that when you've only been around for seventeen years, and you've only ever had one of everything, but it's true."

That quote will be my life motto from this very moment, just saying. And all of Smith's writing is completely inspirational. This woman has a way with her words—she knows how to change readers' lives and give them a point of view in life that they've never read about before. Everything about the beginning to the end was just spectacular, **and I truly enjoy reading when I don't know I actually am, instead I'm just watching the characters interact and deal with their issues just like that**. Books like this are rare, but this one is a keeper.

As I mentioned above, **Annabeth is independently perfect**. The decisions she made were exactly what I was hoping she'd do, and there were no signs of her being an idiot at any time. So many young people can probably relate to her and her story, and she's an example of a teenager who broke free of the typicalness that people expect of them. She can definitely compare to some of the best protagonists that I've read about in years, and that's something remarkable. And her without Noe? I'd say it's a total better match than with, although their relationship was something completely understandable at the same time.

Smith has readers thinking **about the importance of friendship and family** all throughout her latest novel, from the first page to the last. All in all, this left me with teary eyes and sudden heart bursts when something good or crazy would occur. Everything about it made sense to give it a pure 5 star rating, since it actually gave me *a sense of the infinite* little by little until it actually struck me into its own world that I've never been

through before.

Sarah says

(Source: I received a digital copy of this book for free on a read-to-review basis. Thanks to HarperCollins and Edelweiss.)

This was a story about one girl's last year of high-school, and her ups and downs as the year went along.

I felt quite sorry for Annabeth in this story; her relationship with Noe meant so much to her, and the way she was so easily discarded was awful.

The storyline in this basically covered Annabeth's last year of high-school and all the things that happened to her, touching on some teenage problems such as eating disorders, teenage pregnancy, and falling out with her best friend. There were so many small storylines in this that it didn't really feel like there was a main storyline to me, just loads of little things happening to Annabeth over a year of her life, which was okay, but felt a little disjointed at times.

There wasn't really any romance in this one, other than seeing other people's failed romances.

The ending to this was okay, and it was clear that Annabeth had been through a lot during the course of the book, I just felt like there was a little something missing for me though.

6 out of 10.

Estelle says

4.5 stars. This is a special book.

Emily says

A Sense of the Infinite is a book about friendship, and a phenomenal one at that. As a huge contemporary reader, I have read countless novels focusing on the relationship between friends, but Hilary T. Smith's most recent novel does not merely melt into the masses of other "friendship books." Thanks to its realistic progression and gorgeous, empathetic writing, it is one of the best books of its kind that I have ever read.

When I started reading A Sense of the Infinite, I first fell in love with the highs of Annabeth's relationship with Noe. The two characters have been best friends since freshman year, and not without a good reason—although this novel focuses on their growing apart, readers still get to see moments when they connect and help each other through difficult situations. Smith delves deeply into describing the girls' friendship, showing how close the characters are and how much they mean to each other at the novel's onset. As a result, readers will understand and empathize with the loss Annabeth feels when Noe begins to slip away.

For example, my favorite positive aspect of their friendship is Annabeth's ability to be friends with Noe's boyfriend, Steven. Annabeth and Steven engage in clever and strictly platonic banter, becoming close in their own right and adding another layer of friendship to the storyline. I found this element of the plot to be impressively realistic, and I applaud Smith for avoiding childish melodrama and jealousy. Despite their faults, Annabeth and Noe trust each other enough to each have a relationship with Steven, which truly makes their friendship stand out.

But as Annabeth and Noe begin to drift apart, the story becomes less about friendship and more about self development. Just as Smith fully fleshes out her story's friendships, she also gives Annabeth a complex personality that grows with all the trials she experiences—both related and unrelated to Noe. I cheered relentlessly as I watched Annabeth go from basing all her decisions around Noe to making her own choices. And as the protagonist grapples with long-buried family secrets and deals with other personal conflicts that arise, she learns so much and, at some point along the way, becomes an adult. By the end of the story, Annabeth has transformed from Noe's other half to her own independent person, keeping readers invested in her development along the way.

Complete with plenty of senior-year milestones with which many teenagers will identify, *A Sense of the Infinite* is a wonderfully relatable and empathetic story. The writing—while not quite as vivid and distinctive as the writing in Smith's first novel, *Wild Awake*—is emotional, descriptive, and paced to capture the flow of real life. I cannot recommend this novel enough to readers looking for a realistic contemporary, whether they want to escape their real life or find a story that mirrors it brilliantly.

This review originally appeared at www.foreverliterary.blogspot.com.

Lucy says

A coming-of-age story exploring adolescent identity, familial love, and the evolution of teenage friendships. *A Sense of the Infinite* is a slow-paced, thoughtful story of what it means to be a teenage girl rapidly approaching adulthood. Smith packs a ton of issues into her story - including rape, depression, self-harm, abortion and eating disorders - but she does so with ease. The plot never feels contrived, only realistically complicated.

The focus of *A Sense of the Infinite* is the increasingly strained relationship between Smith's protagonist Annabeth and her best friend, Noe. Smith understands that the most important person in the average teenage girl's life isn't the cute boy next door, but her best friend. Unlike many YA authors, Smith also acknowledges that maintaining friendships from a young age through adolescence is hard work, and teenage friendships often don't last.

Annabeth herself was a wonderfully complex, memorable character. Annabeth struggles with depression after she learns the troubling truth of her parentage. Her internal thoughts were, at times, difficult to read, but her strengthened relationship with her mother and her eventual journey from self-hatred to self-acceptance were powerfully cathartic.

My only criticism is of Smith's portrayal of vegetarianism. Two characters in *A Sense of the Infinite* are vegetarian, and both are revealed to have eating disorders. As someone who eats much more regularly and healthily since going vegan, I resent the implication in this novel that vegetarianism should be treated as a warning sign for bulimia or anorexia. It's almost impossible to find veg*n characters in YA lit who actually

care about animal welfare and aren't secretly repressed or struggling with an eating disorder. Just once, I'd like to see veg*nism written well; not as a symptom or a funny character quirk, but as a personal decision not to support the meat industry which is respected by the author.

Many thanks to Katherine Tegen Books for providing a copy of *A Sense of the Infinite* in exchange for an honest review.

Publisher: Katherine Tegen Books

Rating: 3 stars | ★★★☆☆

Review cross-posted to Paperback'd

Gabby says

Ehhh, I stopped reading this after 130 pages. I don't want to write a full review for this, but just know that this book **was not my jam**. Once again I'm left disappointed by one of my most anticipated books of 2015. I thought this book would be relatable but that's the last thing it is. The characters are annoying and immature and I can't think of one character I even remotely liked or cared for. I don't know why I was expecting so much to be honest. This book fell short of average.

Molly says

The world needs more quiet books.

This is the story of Annabeth's senior year of high school. For years, she's been buoyed by her close friendship with Noe. But now Noe is pulling away from her, and she's feeling alone and uncertain. Ultimately, she works through these issues -- and several others. But what I loved about this novel is that the issues weren't all consuming, even if they were serious. I had a completely different perspective than the School Library Journal review, which found the book "full of dark decisions" and the secondary characters "flat and underdeveloped." I thought Annabeth's character had incredible voice, and that the decisions she makes and glimpses she gives of secondary characters were true to that voice. This is a book that doesn't talk down to teens or tie up difficult issues in a neat bow. Highly recommended.
