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Siria loves everyone at Pop's firehouse. And she loves the stars in the winter sky. Her mother, who died, named her after Sirius—the Dog Star, brightest in January. But starry nights can fill with flames, and Siria sneaks out to chase the firetrucks. If she's there, everyone will be safe. Still, Siria's not brave like Pop. Her best friend Douglas used to chase with her, and it wasn't so scary. But she did something wrong; they're not friends now. This winter, Siria must learn to be brave. Because she's got to fix things with Douglas; and when Pop is injured, she needs courage, and her friends, more than ever.

Winter Sky Details

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From Reader Review Winter Sky for online ebook

Scott says

Gag! Was this a kids book? Talk about boring a kid to death and make them not read anymore. The language is too infantile though for a YA or even a middle grade reader. It just didn't fit anywhere. I had to finally start skipping bits of the book. I never did figure out who the fire starter was. I didn't care enough to go back and try to figure it out either.

I picked it up based on cover and back blurb. I should look these books up on Goodreads first.

Karen GoatKeeper says

When Siria hears sirens headed for a fire, she follows. Her father is a fireman and she is scared he will get hurt.

Things change when Siria spots several small fires in the neighborhood. Who is setting them? Is it arson? And how does it involve her friend Douglas?

Then there is the dog that looks like a wolf. It has a rope collar and drags a chain.

The rescue is the thing, the best part of being a fireman or, possibly, of being anyone.

Siria is named for the dog star Sirius, brightest star in the winter sky. Canus major, the great dog, follows Orion, the hunter, across the winter sky and is followed by Canus minor, the little dog. Her mother wrote a personal book about the stars and their stories. These are interwoven into the narrative.

The book is easy to follow and keeps the reader's or listener's interest. I listened to the audio version. It is easy to listen to and well done.

Chelsea Couillard-Smith says

A sweet story, but not one that distinguishes itself. Giff develops a nice sense of a community of realistic characters surrounding Siria, the element of danger that comes from Siria's father's job as a firefighter is engaging, and it's a fluid, quick read. However, I had too many questions surrounding the plot - How long has Siria been chasing fires? Does no one really notice how often she is sneaking out at night? Why isn't she able to differentiate between fires that are dangerous, and those that are small and clearly for warmth? How can she see all of these fires from her room? Why are there so many fires in general in such a small neighborhood? I just found these questions kept getting in the way of my enjoyment of the story. I also struggled with the setting - I couldn't quite visualize whether this was a busy urban area or a small city or even a smaller town. At times it felt like some odd combination of all of them. And there were some inconsistencies as well, such as Siria claiming to really miss her best friends at school but then at the same time calling Laila and Danny, who live in her building, her best friends (and never mentioning the other friends again). Overall, it's an adequate, satisfying story, and Siria is a sympathetic protagonist, but I found it hard to lose myself in it.

Lena says

I don't know what it is about this book that I didn't like. It was nothing objectionable. It just didn't catch my attention the way I would have liked. My son, who listened to it with me, also wasn't impressed.

The story follows Sirius, named for the star, as she tries to solve a mystery of who is starting fires around her neighborhood. And though it COULD have been a good mystery, and I didn't guess the culprit ahead of time, I just didn't love it. It was very short, and maybe that was part of it. It wasn't well-developed enough to get into anything in depth. I think it could have been a really great book, if it had been about twice as long. But it was sort of surface, and the writing was so simplistic it was almost choppy.

Overall, this is an okay book, it just didn't grab me.

Robin says

Great book on tape. Little mystery but written for a younger audience so not too complex of a plot. Main character very likable in what was a believable story.

Bethany says

You're lying awake in bed when all of a sudden, the wail of sirens and the rumble of fire truck engines break the silence. That's your cue. You have to make sure he's safe. After all, you're his lucky star!

Eleven-year-old Siria, named after Sirius, the brightest star in the winter sky, has a secret: she and her best friend, Douglas, chase after fire trucks, just to make sure her dad and the other firefighters are safe. She'd be in huge trouble if she were ever caught! But then, someone starts setting fires, and Siria is determined to find out who and why. Could it be arson? An accident? Along with a new four-legged friend, she musters strength and courage she was unaware she had to try and solve this mystery.

I really enjoyed Winter Sky. This middle grade novel is short yet action-packed and is sure to appeal to anyone who likes a good mystery as well as a positive message.

Evelyn says

A quick, easy read, with an easy-to-follow plot (I believe. Again, I don't remember how it was when I read it).

Angie Fehl says

Siria has a love of astronomy she inherited from her late mother, her name itself inspired by the stars. Now being raised by her firefighter father and the neighbor down the hall, Siria spends much of her time bonding with her friends and worrying over her father's dangerous job. She's developed a habit of sneaking out of their apartment late at night (when she's left with the neighbor-babysitter) to follow sirens and make sure her dad is okay.

This Christmas season, there has been a rash of fires close together cropping up in Siria's neighborhood. She begins to suspect arson. She also wants to find out the story of the mysterious stray dog who seems to keep following her around. With her friends Douglas and Laila, she sets out to find the truth. Answers are revealed, but the truth hits uncomfortably close to home.

Each chapter starts with a short legend regarding the constellations. It takes the form of an astronomy book that once belonged to Siria's mother. These legends serve as a sort of foreshadowing to events that are about to unfold in Siria's life in the chapter ahead.

The story itself is not all that complex. Giff could've gone a little deeper with it to really get that emotional punch. But what is here is still enough to pull at the heartstrings a bit. Siria learns tough lessons in the dangers of jumping to conclusions and the strength that can come from placing unshakable faith and trust in family and friends.

Rosalie says

Siria's family consists of her pa, her babysitter Mimi and herself. Siria's mother died when she was very young but Siria vaguely remembers her mother whispering to her, "take care of your pa". Siria lives on the 7th floor of an old apartment building and spends much of her time sitting on the fire escape looking at the winter sky for the star she was named after. Every time Siria hears a siren she runs to the fire escape to see her father's fire truck is racing down the street. Then she grabs her coat, sneaks out of the apartment and hops on her bike to chase the truck to the fire. Siria never lets her dad see that she is at the fire and as soon as it's out she quickly returns to her apartment building. Lately, though small fires have been started close to her building and Siria wonders if these fires are being set. Siria begins to investigate and all of the clues are pointing to her best friend Douglas who lives in the same building. Siria can't believe Douglas would commit arson! Should she tell her dad? If she does she'll will have to admit to fire chasing and then she will be able to take care of him like her mother asked her to do.

This is a good book for middle grade readers. It has a mystery and a struggle with right and wrong. There's also a lesson on jumping to the wrong conclusion and how it can lead you in the wrong direction.

Y says

There sure are a lot of fires in this little community that a young girl is within walking/biking distance to. Why is that? Never explained. Most things aren't explained very well. What's with the stars/constellation themes? No idea, it's just kind of there. (The ties of the dog stars, and Siria being named for Sirius, and there being a dog in the book are all superficial.) Conflicts come up now and then and are solved with amazing ease. Not a terrible book, but inconsequential and dull. The most important takeaway is learning what it means to be selfless ("It's all about the rescue"), I suppose, which is a theme better implemented than the "stars" factor. I personally don't think many children of the target audience will be very impressed. (view spoiler)

KieraK says

This held my almost 9yo's attention better than mine.

Ms. Yingling says

Siria's mother died when she was very young, and her father is a firefighter. Siria is so concerned for his safety that whenever she hears the trucks in her urban neighborhood, she runs or bikes to the scene to make sure he stays safe. Her friend Douglas loves fires, and often comes with her, but her friend Laila is content to stay at the apartment building. In her roaming around, Siria finds a dog that is hungry and living in abandoned buildings, sometimes getting its chain caught. She tries to buy food and keep the dog safe, but she is alarmed at the amount of small fires that have been popping up and making it necessary for her father's unit to go on calls. When she finds a piece of Douglas' coat in a suspicious location, she thinks that he is setting the fires and fights with him about it. At one fire right before Christmas, Siria's father is injured and has to go to the hospital. Siria stays with Mimi, an older woman who lives in her building and babysits her. Izzy, who is on her father's crew, lets Siria know that she has been watching Siria show up at all of the fires. Izzy steps in to help take Siria Christmas shopping, and also encourages her to keep the dog, whom she has bathed and brought to her apartment. Siria solves the mystery of the fires, her father comes home, and she gets to keep the dog.

Strengths: The city setting is very vivid, and a nice change, since not as many books have children who live in apartments as main characters. Also interesting insights on what it would be like to have a parent who is a fire fighter.

Weaknesses: Mimi is not doing a good job of watching Siria! She's running after fires, hanging around in abandoned buildings AND fooling with a feral dog? The mystery of the fires being set was not solved in a satisfactory way for me, and some of the writing is not as well done as I would expect from Giff.

Laura says

Nice story

Grace says

It was cool trying to figure out the mystery of the fires going around town and the small little stories about the constellations.

Vicki Gooding says

Sweet story. Children who find a mystery, and loyalty in the mediocre things of life. And a great dog

