



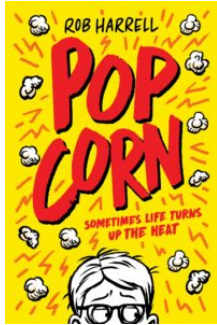
# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP MAGAZINE

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# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“The story is about a boy called Andrew, who is having a wildly epic day at school and his anxiety is ‘popping’ off the charts. It is school picture day and all Andrew needs is a good photo for his mum - but today, the world seems to be against him!

The thing I liked about this book is that it shows and expresses how a middle school person would experience and deal with anxiety. Another thing that I liked about the book is that it had little comic strips to express his feelings, which I really enjoyed.

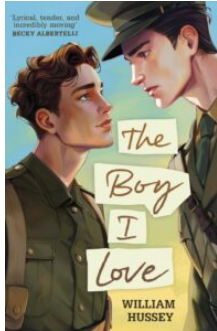
The thing I did not like about the book is that it was always locked into the perspective of the main character, so it felt like you never really got to see the other characters in the book. The book could also feel a little repetitive at times. Overall though, I would recommend this book to others to read.

\*\*\*\* (four stars out of five).”

- Yusuf

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“The story follows a young man who is sent to fight in World War 1, after his father finds out about his secret relationship with another young man in the town. Shortly after arriving, his friend is killed and he nearly dies - but survives and receives a medal for his bravery. Upon his return to The Front, he meets another young soldier who he promises to protect.

I really enjoyed the overall message of the story and the struggle the main character goes through. The themes that the book explores are not written about often and it was refreshing to see them explored in this type of story.

Although I enjoyed the book, I did feel that the central dilemma of the story did occasionally drag on, extending some parts of the story unnecessarily. I also thought that some of the character development was a little too sudden in places. However, the setting was well created in the writing.

Overall, an amazing, moving and heart-breaking piece to read. \*\*\*\* (four out of five).”

- Habiba

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“The book tells the story of Neon, who is meant to be going to bed, but he is in a panic - as he wants to do things the right way. He hides around his house as the story goes back in time to show his relationship with his girlfriend.

In the story, I liked how Neon eventually calms down and controls his mood - he also faces his fears and stops it from happening before becoming overwhelmed by his feelings.

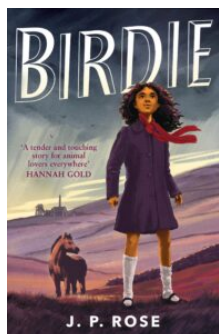
Although I enjoyed the book, I did notice that the main character panics a lot. The book also shows how Neon was bullied a lot when he was younger and the author uses the character of the bully to show the opposite of Neon and his actions.

Overall, I would recommend this book, as it shows both the good and bad side of our actions. (\*\*\*\* out of five stars).”

- Subhan

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“The book is about a young mixed-race girl called Birdie Bagshaw, who has spent most of her life in a care home, never knowing who her real family is. Eventually, Birdie gets an actual family - which she has always wanted - and develops a strange bond with a species of animal (a pit pony), that she likes to pet and care for. However, the home that she now has with her aunt has no love (she is quite evil and cold) and the town is quite hostile to Birdie as soon as she arrives.

Overall, I thought this book was alright for all ages and I would recommend it.

\*\*\*\* (out of five)”

- Hashim

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“`Wolf Siren` tells the story of a young girl (`Red`) who lives in a small coastal village, with old legends about sea creatures and dangerous wolves. One night, she hears a beautiful song coming from the waves and the village is gripped with fear.

The setting for the story is very vivid and atmospheric - you can almost feel the cold sea wind and hear the waves when reading the book. The characters feel real and relatable, especially `Red` - her courage and kindness. The narrative has a great mix of mystery, adventure and heart, with a lovely message about being tolerant and understanding others.

However, some parts of the plot felt a little bit predictable, especially towards the end. Also, a few of the side-characters could have been developed more to make the story seem fuller. I also felt that pace was a slight issue in the middle of the book, which would have benefitted from a little more excitement.

Overall, I thought the book was wonderfully imaginative and cleverly blends folklore with the theme of friendship (teaching the reader to not judge others by how they appear).

\*\*\*\*\* (Five Stars)”

- Horiya

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“Tilda is a young girl who lives on the island of Ayrie with her mum and dad. Following the departure of her brother to the mainland, Tilda’s life changes further when she is asked to help the new boy, Albie, adjust to life on Ayrie and the surrounding islands.

I found this to be a gentle, friendly read of a book - a perfect ‘Sunday’ read. It is a story of childhood adventures and beautiful locations. A story about nature and the joys of spending time with others, as part of a community.

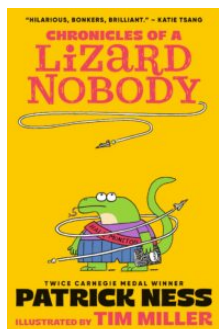
With the exception of the ‘storm’ in the 3rd Act, the narrative has a very gentle pace, which some readers may find to be ‘slow’, if they enjoy a fast-paced ‘adventure’ read. Also, because the author has chosen to write the story in the voice of Tilda, the lack of quotation marks (using italics instead) when other characters speak can be a little confusing when conversations are taking place.

Overall, this is a gentle and friendly read that I would recommend to others who enjoy a relaxing reading experience. \*\*\*\* (out of five stars).”

- Mr. Robinson

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“Zeke is a monitor lizard and, along with his friends Alicia and Daniel, he is appointed as a ‘Hall Monitor’ by his school Principle (Head Teacher). But, on his first day in the role, he punches Pelicarnassus (school bully and super-villain-in-waiting) - leading to a confrontation that could destroy everything.

Having read this book as a family, we found the narrative to be tonally uneven and coupled with a writing style that we found difficult to read along with in places (not just ‘young readers’ but ‘older readers’ too).

However, in amongst the unusual storylines (France on Zeke’s knee?) is a rather touching plotline involving Zeke caring for his mother, who is suffering from depression (following the loss of Zeke’s father). We found this aspect of the book to be very well written and emotionally impactful.

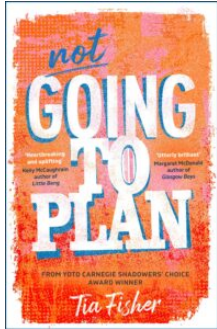
Overall, between the animals, the zany humour and big emotional issues, we found this book to be a trick read, with a writing style that made it hard to engage with at times. \*\* (Two stars).”

- Mr. Robinson



# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“As Summer begins, Noah decides to make the most of every day - instead of wasting it. He wakes up, learns new skills, spends time with his friends and challenges himself to try things he has never done before.

When reading this book, I found the story to be interesting and it kept me wanting more. I liked the characters and wanted to see what happened to them - I also really liked the message of the story.

However, I did find some parts to be a bit slow and not very exciting, with some parts taking too long to get back to the main events. Overall, I thought it was a good book and I would recommend it. \*\*\*\* (4 stars out of 5).”

- Saim

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“There is a new kid who arrives in Ayrie, a peaceful island, their name is Albie, and they hate living here. That is until Albie’s new friend, Tilda, has an idea to take them on an adventure to the secret island - the one that is supposedly haunted!

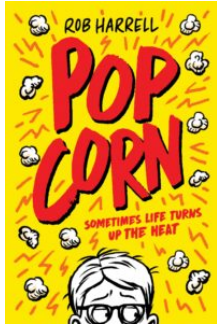
I liked the concept of this book and how the author describes the scenery. I liked how Tilda was written as the ‘calm girl’ who loves her home town in contrast with Albie, who is new, energetic and hates the place and how peaceful it is.

There was nothing that I did not like about this book because it was quite a calm and peaceful read, with well written central characters that I could relate to. Overall, an amazing read. \*\*\*\*\* (Five stars).”

- Sabrina

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“This is a story about a boy named Andrew. All he needs is a perfect photograph for his mum. Overall, the world goes to find him. I thought the comedy in this book was hilarious. My favorite character is Jonesy, he is the best person in the book. Andrew has a lot of funny moments in the story, like Andrew being anxious from his school pictures. I was not too keen on the experiments in the book and I also did not like the bully - I found him very selfish and unkind.

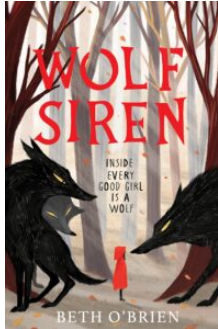
I think this is one of the best books I have ever read.

\*\*\*\*\* (out of five).”

- Subban

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“The book tells the story of ‘Red’, a 13-year-old girl, who lives in a village where everyone fears the nearby woods. The villagers believe the forest is dangerous because of the strange magic and wolves that live there.

What I liked about this book is that Red is quite an unusual and memorable heroine. She is curious, brave, and determined, but she also has flaws and fears that make her feel realistic to the reader, including her visual impairment.

One thing that I did not like about the book was that I felt it had a slow start, spending a lot of time introducing the village, the forest, and Red’s life before the main action begins.

Overall, I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys fantasy / fairytale stories. \*\*\* (three out of five).”

- Saim

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“This book follows the character of Neon, a young-adult, about to `truly` be with his outgoing girlfriend, Aria. However, as they do, Neon`s mind begins to wonder "what if?" This sends him on a rollercoaster of memories.

I really enjoyed the setting of this book, since when you are trying something for the first time, you tend to over-think and your brain speeds through every hypothetical, leading you on a trip down memory lane - which is what this book explores.

Unfortunately, it`s strength is somewhat combatted by it also being a weakness. I appreciated the structure of the narrative, but it can be hard to follow at times. But I found it unique, adding a certain charm to the `romance` genre.

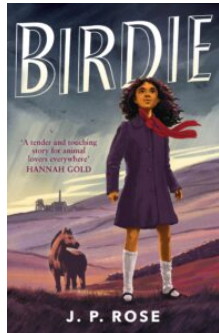
Overall, I would recommend this book, as you rarely find stories structured in this way.

4 stars out of five (\*\*\*\*).”

- Habiba

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“This book is about a girl called Birdie, who is viewed as an `outsider` since moving into a new area. Birdie spends her time hiding, until something finally makes her feel welcome.

What I really enjoyed about this book was the gentle pace, which allowed me to take in and appreciate the development of the story and the characters.

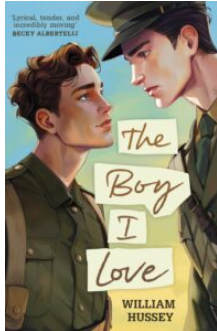
One thing I did not enjoy was how the characters themselves spoke, which seemed like an `old-English` dialect, which I found difficult to understand at times.

Overall, I thought it was a fairly good book and I would recommend it to others.  
\*\*\*\* (out of five).”

- Medina

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“Set during World War One, the book tells the story of Stephen Wraxall, a British Lieutenant, returning to the French battlefield after being injured and losing the person he loves. On his journey back he meets Danny McCormick, a new recruit, and a new relationship begins.

Working as both an LGBTQ love story and as a piece of historical fiction, it is clear to see why this book took the author three years to write - with both excellent pacing and incredible historical detail leading up to the events of the disastrous `Battle of the Somme` in 1916.

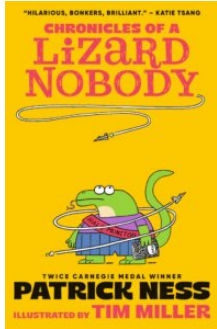
The book really makes you feel the losses of war and the tragedy of men like Stephen - who fought for their country, while also being demonized by it, due to their sexuality. The ending, although feeling a little quick, contains a strong message regarding attitudes of the times, in an excellent piece of literature that still feels relevant to parts of society today.

Overall, a powerful story about war, love and loss - which I would recommend to others to read.  
\*\*\*\*\* (Five stars).”

- Mr. Robinson

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“`Chronicles of a Lizard Nobody` is a funny and slightly chaotic middle-grade story about a lizard who feels completely invisible in his everyday life - hence being a `nobody`.

When reading the book, I liked how it was genuinely funny, with weird and creative jokes - like the idea of France being on someone`s knee.

Although the plot can feel quite predictable, following a familiar `underdog` proving themselves type of structure, I still found the book to be very funny - even if the pacing seemed a little uneven, with some slower narrative sections.

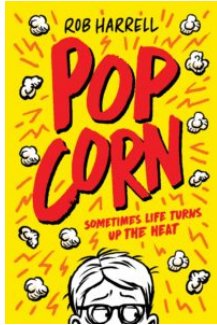
Overall, I would recommend this very funny book - 4 stars out of 5 (\*\*\*\*).”

- Saim



# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“`Popcorn` is about a boy, Andrew, who suffers from anxiety and OCD, and he is trying to be `normal` and get through it.

He has fun in his school and tries to make friends and tries to pass his subjects, but he somehow makes everything 10-times funnier.

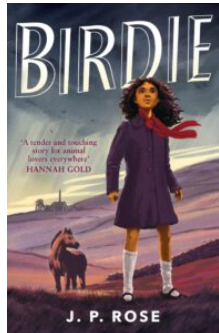
He has a bully, who picks on him even though he has a disability. Andrew tries to fit in, but the bully mocks him for trying.

Overall, I really liked the goodness in this book and would recommend it. \*\*\*\* (4 stars).”

- Hashim

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“Birdie is a mixed-race girl from a children`s home, who is sent to go live with her aunt. Once there she is lonely, until she meets Mr. Duke (a pony). When he is in danger, she fights to save him - which helps her to find a place where she feels she belongs.

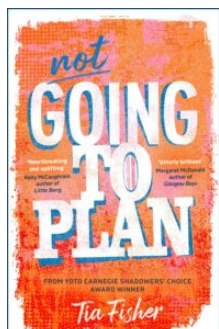
The thing that I liked about this book was the strong connection between Birdie and Mr. Duke and the ending was very nice (no spoilers). However, I did not like how mean Aunt Mable was to Birdie and I found some of the incidents involving racism towards Birdie to be quite harsh.

Overall, I loved the book and would probably read it again. Four stars out of five (\*\*\*\*).”

- Halima

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“The story is about a young girl, Marnie, who gets herself expelled from school and moves to a new one. Once there, she gets paired with a boy who’s completely opposite to her; yet they need to help each other to revise for their GCSEs. However, another boy gets her pregnant and she relies on Zed for help.

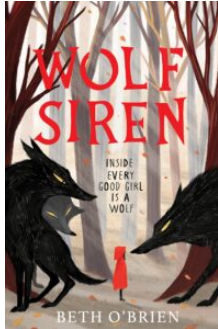
I really enjoyed how this book conveys a message to children in secondary school to always be careful with people you don’t fully trust. I also liked the structure of the paragraphs and how they convey how Marnie feels and what she is going through.

Overall, I think this is a story that is more aimed at Year 10 and 11 students (rather than Year 7-9), as they will be experiencing similar events to the characters - such as going through exams - and may be more likely to experience things like these. But I did enjoy the book and would read it again. \*\*\*\*\* (5 stars).”

- Aleena

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“The book is about a girl called ‘Red’, who is forbidden from going to the woods, which is occupied by wolves, but the place also holds strange magic - making it a very dangerous place.

When reading the book, I liked that there was quite detailed descriptions of the events that occurred throughout the book, although I would also have liked some pictures, as I felt this would help me to envision this type of ‘fantasy’ story better.

Overall, I thought it was a good book and I would recommend it to others. (\*\*\*\* out of 5).”

- Nadirah

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“This book follows 17-year-old Neon, as he is seen to be intensely nervous before being with his girlfriend. The book then moves back in blocks of time from 24 minutes, hours, days, etc. In doing so, the story reveals the history of their relationship over the past 2 years.

The book shows a view of male sexuality that focuses on his feelings and emotions, rather than typical male bravado - with humour to engage readers and make it more relatable, rather than awkward.

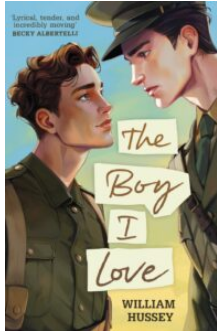
However, I did think the reverse structure of the narrative could be confusing to some readers - going back in time, rather than forwards, which can seem quite disorientating. Also, I found the quick pace made the story feel less detailed, meaning the reader may not know everything that is going on.

Overall, I thought it was an interesting way to present a `romantic` narrative and would give it three stars out of five (\*\*\*)”

- Rayan

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“The story follows Lieutenant Stephen Wraxall, a 19-year-old soldier fighting in World War One. Returning to `the front` after an injury and the loss of his first love, he meets a new soldier, Danny, and feelings develop for him - but he is someone who he can only call a `friend` in public.

The novel follows the progression of their relationship, both publicly and privately. It is a story set in the past, with a message that transcends time.

William Hussey writes in a way that captures the attention of the reader and we feel for the characters and the situations they are in. It never felt like the book was dragging on, which was a good thing, the pace of the story was well-maintained - although the war scenes were very fast-paced, but this could be to reflect how it felt to be in the moment of battle.

Overall, I thought this book had an important message and found the book very engaging - I would recommend it to other readers. \*\*\*\*\* (5 stars).”

- Hasher

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“The story follows a young girl who lives on a remote island, she spends her time exploring the wild coast and watching the birds, until she discovers an abandoned boat and the secrets it holds. This is a book about nature and solitude and finding the magic in the world around you.

I really liked the beautiful and descriptive language the author used for the island and the ocean, it made me feel like I was actually there. I also enjoyed how the story felt mysterious and exciting when the boat was discovered.

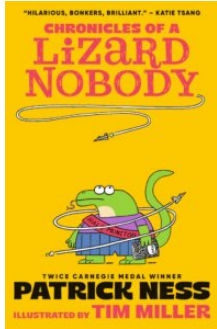
One thing I did not not like was that the book was rather short and I wanted to know more about what happened to the characters. Also, sometimes the pacing felt a bit slow - with a little too much description in places.

Overall, it was a haunting and lovely story that makes you think - I would recommend it to other readers (5 stars \*\*\*\*\*).”

- Hooriya

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“`Lizard Nobody` is about a lizard called Zeke and his friends, Alicia and Daniel (who are hall monitors). And things go wrong when Zeke gets his job revoked.

In the book, I really enjoyed the fight between Ms. Pfister and Zeke, which I enjoyed because I liked how Zeke defended himself, but also fought back - trying to keep his reputation.

However, I did not like how Pelecarnasus was being mean to Miel (the blind bird). I also did not like how simple parts of the story were - it was a bit like a fairytale (which have a certain type of resolution at the end).

Overall, I would recommend this book for kids - it was really nice and I enjoyed it.

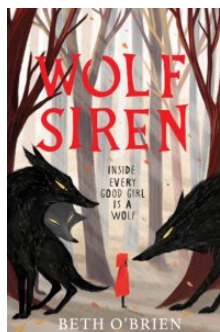
\*\*\*\* out of five stars.”

- Hashim



# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“The story follows a 14-year-old Red Riding Hood, living in a quaint little village in the forest. She loves traversing the woods, and despite the danger it possesses, she travels through it anyway. Red soon discovers an `enigma` within the deep history of her village as the plot becomes thicker than the forest’s tree line.

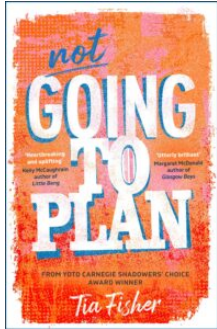
I adored the adaptation of Red Riding Hood presented in this story, adding a sparkle of imagination to the original tale. The characters were well developed and the narrative was easy to follow - with the main ideas being understandable and a treat to read overall.

Despite its strengths, however, I did feel that towards the end more could have been done with the character of the Mayor, as well as Red’s siblings. I also felt that the ending seemed quite rushed and felt a little hollow, with scenes shifting a little too fast. Overall though, I thought it was an amazing book, which I would absolutely read again. (Four stars out of five \*\*\*\*).”

- Habiba

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“The story is about a girl called Marnie, who is kicked out of school because of a `relationship` she has with a boy called Zed and she ends up becoming pregnant. The story follows the actions Marnie takes in dealing with this news.

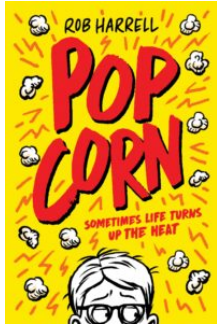
My favorite part of the book was when Zed dances like he is from the 1980s, I found this part to be hilarious. I was not too fond of the character of Jessica, who was bullying Zed and attacks Marnie.

I think this was a decent book, and quite hilarious in parts - I would recommend it to other students (\*\*\*\*\* out of five).”

- Subhan

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



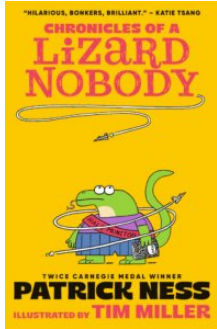
“I really think this is beautiful and funny story - the bit with the ketchup bottle was hilarious. I liked how the main character kept messing up - it was so random. The only part of the story I didn't enjoy was the character of the bully (I am not sure if the character was really needed, but I understand why they were there).

Overall, I thought the book was amazing and I would recommend it to others. \*\*\*\*\* (5 stars).”

- Ayaan

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“`Lizard Nobody` is about a lizard called Zeke and his friends, Alicia and Daniel (who are hall monitors). And things go wrong when Zeke gets his job revoked.

In the book, I really enjoyed the fight between Ms. Pfister and Zeke, which I enjoyed because I liked how Zeke defended himself, but also fought back - trying to keep his reputation.

However, I did not like how Pelecarnasus was being mean to Miel (the blind bird). I also did not like how simple parts of the story were - it was a bit like a fairytale (which have a certain type of resolution at the end).

Overall, I would recommend this book for kids - it was really nice and I enjoyed it.

\*\*\*\* out of five stars.”

- Hashim

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“The book focuses on the protagonist - Tilda, who lives on an island called Ayrie. When a new boy comes to the island, Tilda has to take on a forbidden adventure...

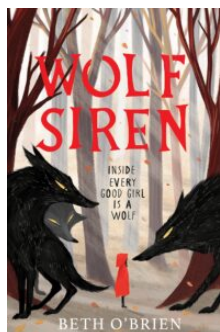
When reading the book, I enjoyed how adventurous the storyline was as we followed Tilda - seeing her develop and meet new people, such as Albie (who she had a strong connection with). However, I found the vocabulary in this book to be limited - perhaps better suited to younger readers (I did not find it that engaging for a `Young Adult` audience). For example, in the opening of the book, the author uses many lists, which I found somewhat repetitive and boring.

Overall, I would give this book 2 stars out of five, as I felt it was aimed at a younger audience (\*\*).”

- Medina

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“Wolf Siren is a fantasy retelling of Little Red Riding Hood, except she has an unknown connection to the magical forest, from where her grandmother disappeared from years ago. Then she needs to confront the corrupt Mayor, while keeping her own secrets safe, in order to save the community.

Overall, I quite enjoyed how this is a coming-of-age story, but is twisted to explore the themes of femininity, misogyny, and going against the oppression and corruption of the powers-that-be (represented by the Mayor).

I didn't enjoy how `Red` had no companions on her journey, yet her closest loved ones are the people who want to report her to the corrupt Mayor. However, this did result in creating sympathy from the reader - wishing that `Red` had someone to trust and rely on.

I loved this book - I would recommend it and read it again. (\*\*\*\* out of five).”

- Aleena

# ROCKWOOD READS SHADOWING GROUP

## OUR REVIEWS



“This book is about a teenager, named Neon - thinking about love, relationships, and an important moment in his life. The book follows his thoughts and feelings, as he decides what to do. The story mainly takes place in a short period of time, focusing on his thoughts.

Overall, I liked how real and simple the story felt, the writing was honest and easy to understand, but still very meaningful. The main character's thoughts felt very relatable, especially about relationships and growing up. I also liked how the book focused on emotions and decisions.

However, sometimes the story felt a bit slow and did not have a lot of action - there were parts where not much happened, which made it less exciting. Also, the story was very much focused on one key moment, so it didn't really explore other parts of the character's life.

Final thoughts: I thought it was a good and thoughtful book about growing up. \*\*\*\* (Four stars out of five).”

- Romeesa