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MAYL810
Review 2 Fiction Book

Booth, Coe. *Caprice*. Scholastic, 2022. Grades 5-8.

Caprice only has one week to choose – Newark or Ainsley. If she starts 8th grade in her hometown Newark, she'll stay with her mom and best friend Nicole. If she accepts the scholarship at Ainsley, she'll move three hours away, reuniting with her friends from the school's Summer Leadership Program. Stuck at this fork in the road, Caprice faces an even more treacherous path – the road behind her. When Grandma goes to the hospital, her estranged family gets pulled back together. Caprice gets pulled back into the past, remembering the sexual abuse she survived at four years old. Her uncle said to keep it a secret. She's only ever told these secrets to her poetry journal.

"sometimes i wish i could

talk

explain

tell

what happened

to me

a long time ago

so it's not inside

filling me up” (54).

It's not just a choice between Newark and Ainsley. It's a choice between keeping his secret and speaking her truth. By using first person narration, Caprice takes ownership of her choices and her survivorship story.

It's not the only part of her story. Although her trauma impacts her, it doesn't define her. Caprice is a full person. She's a dedicated student. Loving daughter. Loyal friend. Budding poet. The tension of the story lies in the rift between her “normal” life (54) and the four-year-old girl who ran away from home. Between staying silent and speaking out.

The book jacket, illustrated by Reniké, captures this duality. On the front cover, a young black girl holds her head high, staring the reader dead in the eye. Look closer. In her eyes are silhouettes of a much younger girl. On the back cover, this little girl descends a flight of stairs, foreshadowing her journey into Uncle Raymond's basement. Blue flowers dominate the white space, mirroring the blue paint and flower bedspread of Grandma's bedroom. The past surrounds her.

Nonetheless, she holds her head high. Caprice's courage will inspire readers to speak up and speak out for others and for themselves.