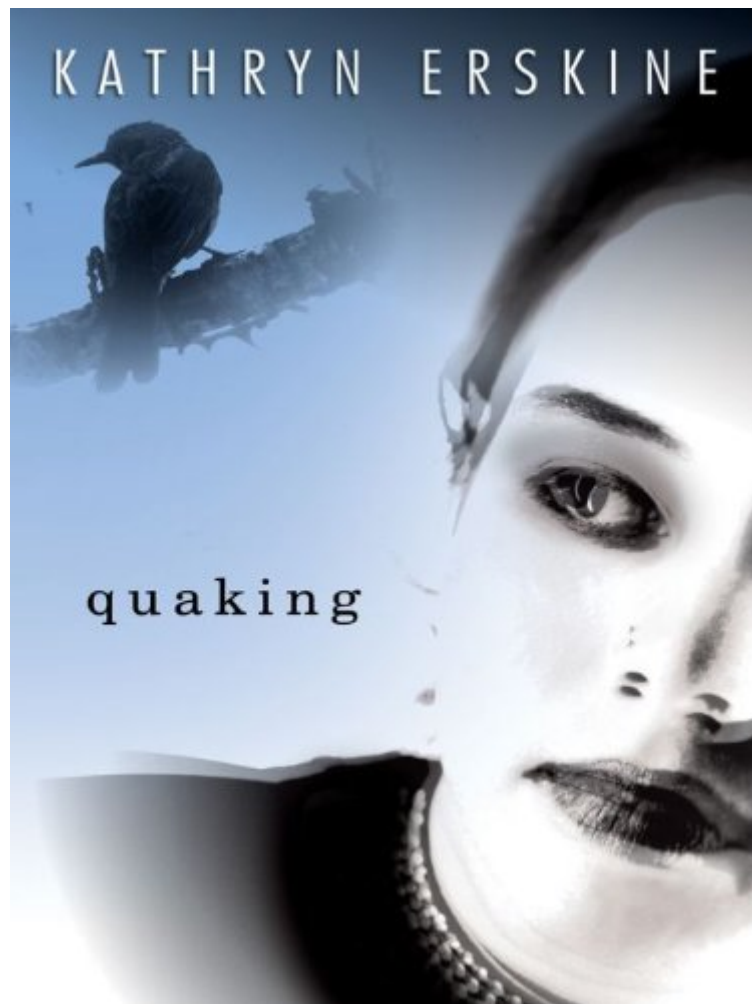


The book was found

Quaking



Synopsis

Goth girl Matt lives her life by simple rules: Stay under the radar, never go by Matilda (only Matt), and don't let anyone get too close. But everything changes when she moves in with a peaceful Quaker family in Pennsylvania. As the country fights a war in the Middle East, Matt fights her own personal war, battling bullies of her past and present and fighting to stand up for her belief in peace. Then violence erupts in town, and Matt finds that she will need to fight even harder to save the family she is starting to love.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When I saw "Quaking" reviewed on the TeensReadToo web site, I mentioned it to my best friend who is a Quaker. She said she'd read it and found it very moving, and encouraged me to read it too. I'm certainly glad I did. What she failed to tell me is that it's a kid's book--and I love to read kid's books. Actually, it has it listed in the 9-12 age range, but since the protagonist is fourteen, it should be listed as Young Adult (YA). Personally, I think it's one of those books that's a cross-over, written to appeal to adults as well as kids ... like so many YA books are. Kathryn Erskine's debut novel tells

the story of Matt (and DON'T call her Matilda!) who is an abused fourteen-year-old shunted from one foster home to another. Matt dresses Goth and memorizes the floor, hiding from the trauma of her past, spurning all offers of kindness and care. What a culture shock for her to end up in the home of Quakers Sam and Jessica Fox! The story builds in intensity as Matt begins to care about her foster parents and becomes involved with the Quaker peace testimony. Feelings about the war in the Middle East run high in her school and her town, with the school bully ("the Rat") and a teacher ("Mr. Warhead") leading the charge against local pacifists. Matt tries to hide her fear of the Rat and his gang, but as the town begins to erupt with violent attacks against houses of worship, she knows it's only a matter of time until the Quaker Meeting House and her foster father are victims. Eventually, in an explosive ending, Matt finds her voice and the strength to face her fear and stand up for her own convictions.

Kathryn Erskine's first novel is emotionally-charged, thought-provoking, and well-written overall. It follows the story of Matt, a teenage girl whose behavior has landed her in a number of different homes. This time, she has to live with a family of Quakers. Although this social outcast seems to have nothing in common with her new family, she slowly begins to respect their views. As she adapts to her new home, she must also adapt to her new school, where she is usually ignored... until she makes a few enemies. Matt's narration sometimes comes off as a bit stilted, using phrasing that doesn't sound like it would come from a teenager. This is somewhat justified in how she is far ahead of the average student, but there are a few lines that struck me as awkward and briefly took me out of the story. Luckily, Matt's character is interesting, as Erskine provides just the right amount of back-story to make her feel human, yet not so much as to bore the reader. The family she stays with also seems realistic; each member adds something interesting to the novel. The novel is full of conflict, hitting a wide variety of emotions just right. Some scenes are sad, others heartwarming, others suspenseful, others funny. Although Erskine occasionally slips into melodrama, she's usually very adept at balancing drama with some lighthearted scenes or witty comic relief. Although I feel like the story could use one more chapter to wrap things up more neatly, the pacing is usually just right. Erskine has travelled many places and has met many people, which is clear in her interesting portrayal of the Quaker religion as a whole. We find out about their history, how they worship, and how they encourage people to live peacefully.

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