



The Silver Bead

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

A Cornish farm, camping, cream teas, coves, swimming with seals, a couple of girls whose friendship is disturbed by the arrival of the daughter of a travelling family (complete with eccentric Great Gran) - it all seems like a traditional, secure read for late primary readers. And so it is for about half of its course - a question of shifting loyalties, of who's in and who's out, of small-scale child-sized dilemmas. But then Zillah, the narrator Katie's best friend (readers may know them from two earlier titles), develops nose bleeds and becomes untypically listless. She has leukaemia and everything changes. Dunmore observes both Zillah's illness and Katie's responses to it with compassionate accuracy. What had been important is now trivial - the stakes are for life or death and everyone, child or adult, is caught up in the desperate struggle. As you grow up, it is very likely that someone in your school contracts leukaemia. Often, with the best of intentions, the bedside curtains are closed around the victim and the family. This novel, without melodrama and without losing its attractive top juniors voice, draws them aside.

Running Order:

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