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Ways to Live Forever

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Intense and troubling yet strangely life affirming, this is the story of 11-year-old Sam who is dying of leukaemia. He is being cared for at home and shares lessons with best-friend Felix, who is also terminally ill. Encouraged by his teacher, he starts to keep a scrapbook, an eclectic mix of lists, questions, facts and pictures that he puts together during his last few months. Here are lists of things he's accomplished, things to do, true facts, instructions and conjectures. Here too are questions on death and dying that have no answers. Curious and scientifically minded, Sam has a need for empirical knowledge ? a need that underlies his probing questions. But, as the lists make all too poignantly clear, Sam is also an ordinary child, full of innocence and humour, mischief and ambition.

Surrounding Sam is a loving family, whose emotional responses are varied and very real. Especially well observed is Dad whose heartbreaking inability to face the truth covers a deep sense of grief and loss. It is a tribute to the author's writing style ? spare, lucid and wholly unsentimental ? that the book is so convincing and the characters credible. The ending is immensely powerful, triggering various responses from the reader ? grief, relief, acceptance even. This is a truly brave and honest book.

Running Order:

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