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# This is Not a Love Story

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

Editors Choice

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

What is it about Amsterdam that inspires authors? First we had [Postcards from No Man's Land](#) [4]; now Keren David visits that city in her latest novel **This is Not a Love Story**. Carnegie winner, **Postcards in No Man's Land**, was notable for introducing difficult questions around sexuality, identity and family relationships. These themes are also central to Keren David's novel - albeit handled with a lighter more contemporary touch

The sudden death of her beloved father finds Kitty in Amsterdam, dragged there by her mother looking to make a new start. Theo is also in Amsterdam in disgrace. Then there is Ethan - beautiful, enigmatic, troubled. It is a potent mix.

The story is told through the words and thoughts of the two main characters as the reader sees incidents from the point of view of both Kitty and Theo. This has the advantage of immediacy - as does the use of the present tense narration - though it also makes it more difficult to establish clear differences in characterisation. However, David handles this technique with assurance, drawing the reader into the world of her teenage protagonists, revealing the background to each gradually through their thoughts or through dialogue rather than extended description. Central to the story is Ethan. He is the catalyst and focus of emotions and tensions. This is a difficult role and Ethan is perhaps, as a result, less successful as a character than Theo and Kitty. However, he has sufficient presence to convince the reader, while the liveliness of the writing carries the action on. Then there is Amsterdam, the city itself. It is not mere background but very much part of the story, the canals, the buildings, the life, all adding colour and depth; this is a real place and there is a sense that this story could only happen in this city. Another strand, adding a very personal touch, is the Jewish background shared by the characters and subtly influencing their views and reactions to events.

Is this a love story? In some ways it is. A love story in which Amsterdam itself plays a part. It is also about teenage relationships and sexual identity. It uses many of the conventions and drivers of the teenage romance, but David has the courage to bring her narrative to a much more open ended conclusion. This an enjoyable read that offers some surprises to the reader without subverting the genre uncomfortably. Recommended.

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