

“Librarian’s Shelf” by Rachelle McPhillips

Good stories right here in Nebraska

Preparing for our Summer Reading Program theme, “You Are Here,” I have been working through a stack of young adult fiction that has something to do with Nebraska.

In the touching novel, “The Red Umbrella,” by Christina Diaz Gonzalez, Lucia’s parents decide to send her and her younger brother, Frankie, to the United States after the communist revolution in 1961. A happy young girl who had lived a relatively easy life filled with thoughts of boys and clothes, Lucia’s world is spun on its head with this move to the States. Eventually, Lucia and Frankie are placed in a foster home in Nebraska. Together they adapt to the climate, language, and cultural misconceptions.

The author includes an endnote explaining the inspiration for her story. She explains that, “From 1960 to 1962, the parents of over fourteen thousand Cuban children made the heart-wrenching decision to send their sons and daughters to the United States...alone.” Three of those children were the author’s parents and mother-in-law.

Much of her research involved asking her family for their stories. She found that while this was the “largest exodus of unaccompanied children ever in the history of the Western Hemisphere,” there was little written about it. She wanted to change that.

In “Wherever Nina Lies,” by Lynn Weingarten, artistic Nina has been missing for two years. Her younger sister, Ellie, happens upon some of Nina’s artwork and believes it is a clue to Nina’s whereabouts. With her exciting new crush, Sean, Ellie hits the road to search for her sister. Teens who enjoy mystery and romance will enjoy riding along as Sean and Ellie cross the country looking for Nina. Local readers should particularly appreciate the moment they roll into Nebraska on page 96:

“HOORAY, NEBRASKA!”

“GO, GO, NEBRASKA!”

“YAHOO, NEBRASKA!”

“WORD TO YOUR MOTHER, NEBRASKA!”

Morgan longs to write the Great American Novel, but satisfies her urge to write by sharing fortune-cookie wisdom on post-its, cash register receipts, and late one night, with honey on several slices of bread. She’s a regular girl living a small-town, Nebraska life. She has a nice (but maybe a little boring) boyfriend who is popular and plays football. She has a supervisor at work who is super-hot and flirty. And while her family is largely dysfunctional, she has a special relationship with her grandmother that she treasures.

During her junior year of high school she sorts out whether or not a kiss between her and the neighbor girl means anything. She chooses between the nice-but-boring boyfriend and the crush from work. Most importantly, Morgan uncovers a truth that changes how she sees her whole life, and must come to terms with breaking hearts and having her own heart broken.

To see book trailers for “The Sky Always Hears Me and The Hills Don’t Mind” and “The Red Umbrella,” visit the Columbus Public Library’s Facebook page.

If you have questions about these titles or want other stories set in Nebraska, please stop by or call 402-564-7116.