

Caterpillars Can't Swim – Book Review

Caterpillars Can't Swim by Liane Shaw is a coming-of-age story revolving around three teenage boys. Each have their own difficulties, hopes and fears. They attempt to deal with these together in various ways of support and hinderance.

I was kindly given this by NetGalley to give an honest review.

Goodreads blurb:

Ryan finds his freedom in the water, where he is not bound by gravity and his wheelchair. When he rescues his schoolmate, Jack, from the water their lives become connected, whether they like it or not. Ryan keeps Jack's secret about that day in the water, but he knows that Jack needs help. The school is full of rumors about Jack's sexuality, and he has few friends. Almost against his better judgement, Ryan decides to invite Jack on a trip to Comic Con he's planned with his best friend Cody, the captain of the school's swim team. The three boys make an unlikely combination, but they will each have the chance to show whether they are brave enough to go against the stereotypes the world wants to define them by.



The concept behind this book is interesting and the beginning was attention grabbing and intriguing. The characters are complex and multidimensional, and you do feel for each

of them. They are faced with issues many teenagers must deal with and the story encompasses important topics such as sexuality, self-acceptance, independence, friendship, relationships, disability and family.

Unfortunately I did find the teenage voice quite unbelievable. These boys are meant to be 17 – 18 years of age, yet they talk, think and behave like they are 13 – 14. It became frustrating very quickly. I am not in that age group so I did my best to be objective, however I do think that teenagers reading it might feel disconnected or wrongly judged and portrayed. There are also many overused tropes and assumptions made about “typical” teenagers.

There are many lessons laid out within the story. This is very good in a book aimed at teenagers, and they are important and valuable lessons, though it could have been better had they been portrayed in a more natural or subtle way.

This book has a good storyline and I felt the need to find out how the characters would deal with their circumstances. I just think there needed to be a better portrayal of how teenagers really behave today, and less use of cliches. I don't think this is the type of YA any age can enjoy but would be a good read for those in their early teens.

I gave it **2.5/5 stars**.