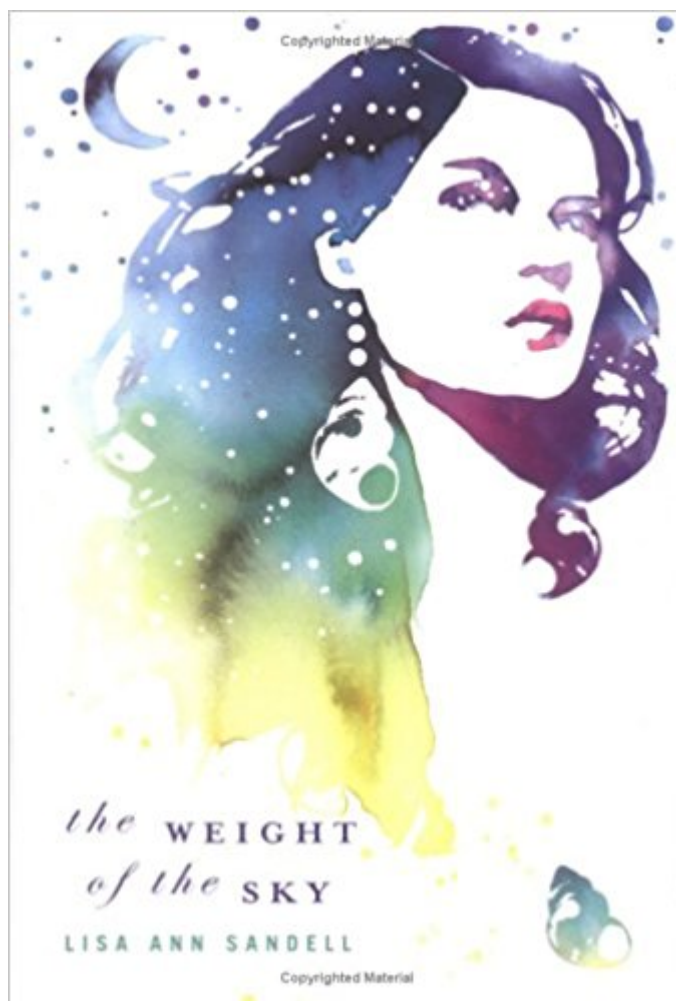


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The Weight Of The Sky



Synopsis

Sarah, like every college-bound junior, deals with constant pressure from teachers, friends, and parents. Besides that, she's a marching band geek and the only Jew in her class. So when she gets a chance to spend the summer on a kibbutz in Israel, Sarah jumps at the opportunity to escape her world. But living in Israel brings new complications, and when the idyllic world Sarah creates suddenly shatters, she finds herself longing for the home she thought she'd outgrown. This lyrical novel beautifully captures the experience of leaving behind a life that's too small, and the freedom of searching for a place with a perfect fit.

Book Information

Hardcover: 292 pages

Publisher: Viking Juvenile (March 2, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0670060283

ISBN-13: 978-0670060283

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 7.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,066,361 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #101 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Religious > Jewish](#) #651 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Religious Fiction > Jewish](#) #3049 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Being a Teen](#)

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Grade 8 Up-Sarah Green, 16, is one of two Jewish students at her small Pennsylvania high school. A self-described band geek, she is tormented by the popular clique and overburdened by her feeling that her religion is a conscious decision every day of her life. When her parents offer to send her to Israel for the summer, she jumps at the chance to assert her independence, reinvent herself in a new place, and live and work on a kibbutz. While her journey to find herself is not without hardship and challenges, and her idealistic view of Israel and kibbutz life is shattered, Sarah survives the summer transformed, with a new sense of Jewish identity, a deeper connection to the land of Israel, increased self-confidence, and a more mature awareness of her own sexuality. The fast-paced,

easy-to-read, free-verse narration captures the voice of a typical American teen. Sarah's coming-of-age experience could have happened during any summer camp or work experience, making the book accessible to a general teen audience. Look to Tammar Stein's *Light Years* (Knopf, 2005) or Pnina Moed Kass's *Real Time* (Clarion, 2004) for a stronger sense of life in contemporary Israel.-Rachel Kamin, Temple Israel Libraries & Media Center, West Bloomfield, MI
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Lisa Ann Sandell lives in New York City. This is her first novel.

Narrating this novel in a free verse style that reads like prose, sixteen year old Sarah tells the story of the summer she spends working on an Israeli kibbutz. For an American girl from a small, mainly Christian town, in Pennsylvania who considers herself a dork and an outsider, it is a transformative experience. Along with the thrill of belonging as a Jew in a Jewish land, Sarah experiences her first taste of independence and her first romantic encounters with boys. Her impressions of Israel, especially Jerusalem and the area of the Galilee where she works as a kibbutz volunteer, are idealistic but acute; they will evoke memories in any reader who has been already been there and will arouse curiosity in those who haven't. Her personal growth, achieved with some pain but also with much satisfaction, is beautifully portrayed; Sarah is a character with whom many teenage readers will identify and ultimately, admire. Other characters are seen through her eyes and emerge as distinct and dimensional individuals, especially the two Israeli boys to whom she is attracted. When one of them, a soldier, is killed, Sarah's almost idyllic summer is shattered and for the first time, she longs for the safety of her home in America. This incident is one of a few that relate to political issues and all of them are dealt with subtly, providing context for a story about living in present-day Israel and background to the lives and feelings of the young Israelis with whom Sarah interacts. The conclusion, once Sarah is back in the United States and applying to colleges, affirms her commitment to Israel and illustrates the options open to almost all Jewish American young people. This is the author's first novel and, like two other recent novels about contemporary Israel, Pnina Moed Kass's *Real Time* and Tammar Stein's *Light Years*, it is highly recommended for teenagers. Reviewed by Linda R. Silver

Sarah has just finished her junior year at a high school in Pennsylvania. As a professed band geek and the only one among her friends who is Jewish, she is always on the outside looking in. When her parents announce plans to send her to Israel to spend the summer, she's shocked that they

would make plans like that without consulting her. At least that's her initial reaction, because once she starts to really consider the idea, she realizes that might be just the thing she needs to find out who she truly is. After a brief visit in Jerusalem with relatives, Sarah heads to the kibbutz, where she will spend the remainder of the summer. Shy and withdrawn, it takes a bit of courage for Sarah to find her place in the group of kibbutz residents and volunteers. Once she begins working in the fields, sharing meals with the others, and doing some exploring, Sarah finds she is more at home here than back in Pennsylvania. The land is beautiful and rich with her history and religion. But underneath the beauty is a violence between people that Sarah just can't quite understand. Lisa Ann Sandell uses verse to take readers on this self-discovery type journey with Sarah. I could sense her appreciation and inspiration, yet also feel her confusion as she spends time exploring her native land and heritage. Thoughtful readers will find this a welcome addition to any library shelf. Reviewed by: Sally Kruger, aka "Readingjunky"

I worked on a kibbutz myself many years ago. And what Sandell is exactly right: it's foreign and beautiful and depressing all at once. Reading this book brought it all back to me. But it's a lot more than a novel about life on the kibbutz. Lisa Ann Sandell's novel is that rarest and most difficult of things to achieve: a readable novel in verse. At first I wasn't sure if I'd enjoy this. Frankly it's not the sort of thing I normally read. But once you get into it, the book reveals its true quality. This is billed as Young Adult fiction. And it's very useful as an introduction to life in modern Israel. Certainly it's not beyond any reasonably literate 12 year old. But the book deserves a much wider audience. Buy it for a child, yes. But make sure you also read it yourself. First class.

Wonderful book for 12 year olds and up. Captures complex feelings about Israel and growing up and relationships. 2 adult friends as well as my 12 year olds and I loved it and related to the narrator.

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