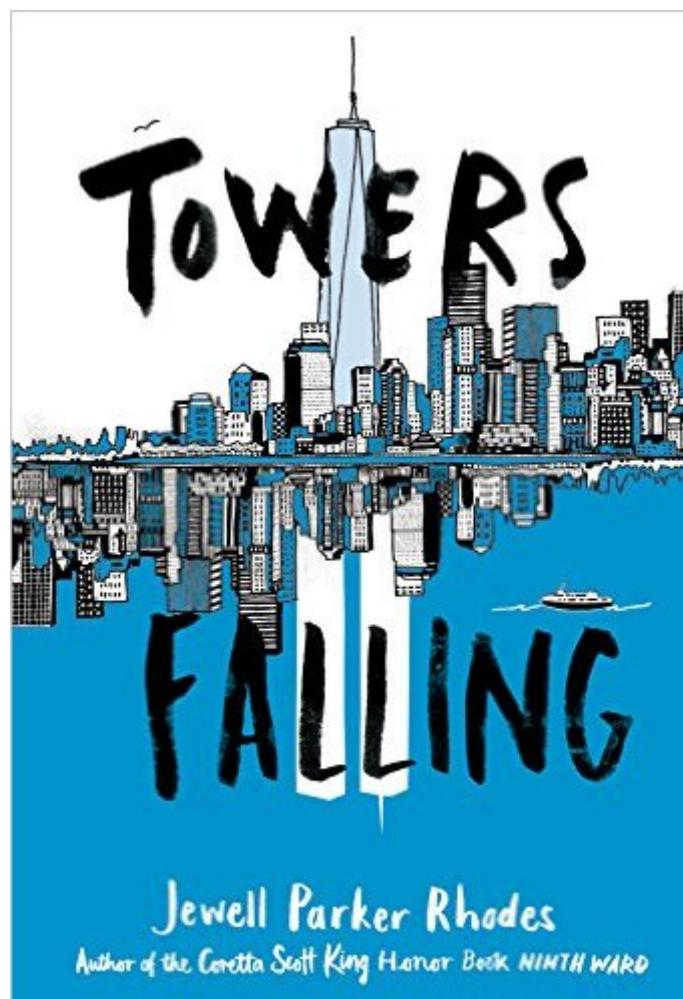


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Towers Falling



Synopsis

From award-winning author Jewell Parker Rhodes, a powerful novel set fifteen years after the 9/11 attacks. When her fifth-grade teacher hints that a series of lessons about home and community will culminate with one big answer about two tall towers once visible outside their classroom window, Deja can't help but feel confused. She sets off on a journey of discovery, with new friends Ben and Sabeen by her side. But just as she gets closer to answering big questions about who she is, what America means, and how communities can grow (and heal), she uncovers new questions, too. Like, why does Pop get so angry when she brings up anything about the towers? Award-winning author Jewell Parker Rhodes tells a powerful story about young people who weren't alive to witness this defining moment in history, but begin to realize how much it colors their every day.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 410 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers (July 12, 2016)

Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (35 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,221 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #2 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Prejudice & Racism #8 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States #60 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

While this book does have some flaws, and probably takes an easy path at the end rather than a more complicated conclusion, I still think it's a good book for young readers who don't understand why "9/11" has an emotional resonance they don't understand. It's a story of dealing with family stress from an unexplained past events, and friends who struggle with unfair perceptions. Those are important topics no matter the context. I read this as a college instructor who deals with students

who - barely - remember 9/11 but certainly don't "care" in the same way adults do. And each year, that gap of feeling grows a little wider. There's nothing wrong with that - when I was a kid, I remember the newspaper headlines on the 15th anniversary of JFK's assassination and I knew it was bad - but only conceptually, not as anything that had any effect on me. College students, and especially young adults, face that as well - everything they read and entertainment they watch has been created by adults whose worldview is impacted by 9/11 but there is no true, shared understanding. In many ways, the young adults are the most "normal" of all, because they're not still in this ongoing fugue state of 9/11-related PTSD that seems to afflict most grownups. I know I'm a little off track of the book, but I think Jewell Rhodes has written a book that is the first step of approaching that distance from a child's perspective - and I think it's an important step. I'm not a parent, but I think this book would be a good, readable, engaging gift for a young reader so they can have an understanding why their parent says "why don't you have more respect!!" on 9/11 when the kid doesn't really care. And maybe the adult can see it the other way - they don't care because it doesn't matter in a real way, and that's the way that time and distance works. So the adults need to keep perspective too. As an adult reader, I did like this book - I don't think it was TOO simple, and I think young readers would be engaged. I was hoping to use it in a college class, but it might be a little too basic for college-age readers who might want a better challenge...but it would depend how I presented it.

Every September I seemed to get asked that pivotal question, "Where were you when the Twin Towers were hit?" Well, I was in middle school. And I remember that on my way to another class, I saw my English teacher crying and speaking to another teacher. I didn't think much of it. Then, I went into my Social Studies class and remember my SS teacher dragging in an old TV and setting it up to play the news. I still remember the distraught look on his face as the towers were burning. But even after all of that, the atrocity of what happened in September 11th, didn't fully hit me until years later when I started searching things about it in high school. That was the moment when the horribleness of that day clicked for me. And yet, I've never wondered how that day would click in the minds of kids who weren't born until after that day. Until now. *Towers Falling* is a unique book for me, mainly because I hardly ever read middle grade novels and when I do, I tend to be more disappointed than not. But also because again, I have never once given thought to how hard it must be to explain to children born after 2001 the terror that day caused. In fact, I have a 12 year old sister and still it never even crossed my mind to discuss 9/11 with her. I think the way Rhodes explains it in *Towers Falling* is appropriate. You get a glimpse of the horror, but you're not really

inundated with it. Mainly because Towers Falling is less about the actual towers themselves, but rather Deja's self-discovery. I wasn't really bothered that the towers weren't in the front and center of Towers Falling. Deja's journey is extremely fulfilling. She was a character who was deeply flawed, sarcastic, and prone to fits of anger, but with everything going on in her life, I understood it. I also loved the supporting characters: Ben and Sabeen. They were such great friends. And those three characters made this book feel so rich and worthwhile. Again, even though the Twin Towers are used as a backdrop more than anything else, when they did appear, it was sobering and just very sad. Overall, I really liked Towers Falling. Sure it could have been deeper, the characters slightly more developed, but I think it was a solid effort for a middle grade novel. I definitely think it's a good way to introduce 9/11 to younger kids who might not really know about everything that happened on that day, without traumatizing them. Highly recommended.

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