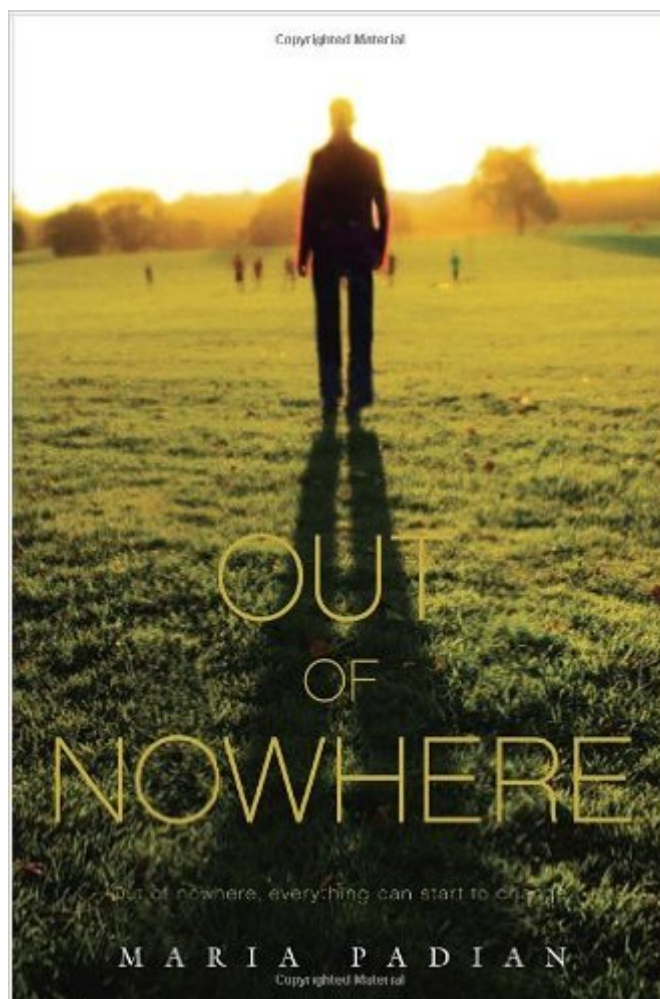


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Out Of Nowhere



Synopsis

Winner of the Maine Literary Award
Called "rich and multidimensional" by School Library Journal in a starred review, *Out of Nowhere* follows Tom Bouchard: captain and star of the Enniston High School soccer team; boyfriend to one of the prettiest, most popular girls; and third in his class, likely to have his pick of any college (if he ever bothers filling out his applications). But life in his idyllic small Maine town quickly gets turned upside down after the events of 9/11. Enniston has become a "secondary migration" location for Somali refugees seeking a better life after their country is destroyed by war. Tom hasn't thought much about his Somali classmates until four of them join the soccer team, including Saeed. He comes out of nowhere on the field to make impossible shots, and suddenly the team is winning, dominating even. But when Saeed's eligibility is questioned and Tom screws up in a big way, he's left to grapple with a culture he doesn't understand and take responsibility for his actions. The refugees came out of nowhere and vanish just as quickly. And Tom may find himself going nowhere, too, if he doesn't start trying to get somewhere.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 670L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 352 pages

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Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.2 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars See all reviews (22 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,173,342 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #40 in Books > Teens >

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Tom Bouchard is the epitome of the All-American youth. He is third in his class while captaining the

soccer team; he is white, Catholic, of Franco-Canadian ancestry; and he lives in small-town Maine, as he points out, the whitest and (almost) coldest state in the union. When a group of Somali Muslim refugees arrive in his town, it splits the populace between those who support their arrival and those who feel they are all potential terrorists who should all go back to Africa. Tom doesn't care one way or the other - he just wants to play soccer. However, when several Somali youths join the team, he soon finds himself first admiring their mad soccer skills and then becoming friends with them. When he and a friend get caught attempting a silly practical joke against an opposing school, he has to perform community service at a drop-in centre for young Somalis, Tom realizes he isn't immune from the fight. When he makes mistakes towards his new friends because he can't understand the cultural differences, he feels ashamed especially as it has caused real problems for a young Somali girl and her family. But then a white supremacist group announces its intention to come to the 'aid' of the white population in this small town and fence-sitting is no longer an option, not only for Tom but for the entire town. Everyone has to pick a side and the differences could splinter this tight-knit little town irrevocably. *Out of Nowhere* takes on many of the issues facing young people today - immigration, racism, cyberbullying, religious differences and tolerance - and it does it with a great deal of empathy and sensitivity. Although the story clearly has a liberal slant, even the conservative character (white, middle-aged, working class male) is depicted sympathetically - he may not like the idea of all these black Muslims coming to town but he is also a man who will come to the aid and defence of the town's young screw-up and, when push comes to shove, he will do what he knows is right. To be honest, I'm not sure why I decided to read this book. My knowledge and understanding of soccer can be summed up in one syllable - huh, I may be the only person on the planet without a Facebook page, and I was fortunate enough to grow up in a time when jobs were plentiful and the transistor radio was the tech choice of disaffected youth. But the book was available and looked interesting and so I took a chance - and I am so glad I did. Although aimed at a YA audience 13 and up, this is definitely a book even adults can enjoy. Author Maria Padian based it on real stories after interviewing young people who had experienced the issues dealt with in the book giving the story a real sense of authenticity. This is a well-written, engrossing coming-of-age tale and, although it deals with some of the most weighty issues facing youth today, it never loses sight of the fact that the purpose of a novel is, first and foremost, to entertain, and *Out of Nowhere* does this extremely well. One word of caution though, there is a fair bit of swearing in the book so it may not be appropriate for the younger reader or for those who are easily offended by four-letter words.

Rating: 3.5
The Low Down: Small towns, small minds; isn't that how the saying goes? Enniston,

Maine's population has made a complete 180 from being in "the coldest, whitest state in America" to one that is playing host to a large influx of Somali Muslims escaping personal and political strife in Africa. Tom Bouchard feels badly for the kids that are dumped in his high school, speaking no English and having to navigate the hallways, classrooms, simmering acrimony and a town that would prefer they disappear altogether. Saeed shows up to class one day wearing a Manchester United football jersey, and Tom finds out that Saeed has played soccer all his life. Inviting him to come and check out the soccer team, soon there are new Somali players on the team. Fortunately, most of the players are thinking more about beating their arch-rival, Maquoit High School, than the change in make-up of their team. Saeed and the other Somalis take the Chamberlain High School team to unheard of new heights. Dizzying, post-season heights. But something is bubbling beneath the surface in just about everyone in town. For Tom, it's his hatred for Marquoit and their rich-kid ways; for the mayor of Enniston, it's the changing makeup of the town's population. Both act on their impulses, with Tom having to do community service and the mayor having to now defend her town and townspeople from the threat of "help" by a group of white supremacists. Then another impromptu action causes pain in the very family that Tom wants to help. Can someone ever truly understand the "why" of other cultures?

Best Thang `Bout It: The subject matter is superb and is presented in a sensitive way. I have yet to read another Young Adult book concerned with the plight of refugees and what happens on a local level when there's a wave of immigrants into a community, so this is a very refreshing and timely topic. It's hard on both sides. And particularly today, when there's a fear of Islam, it makes for an uneasy mixture. This story does a good job of not only describing the hopes and fears of the immigrants, but also the cultural ways and differences that are more than likely the reason the locals can be fearful and resentful.

I'm Cranky Because: Though the story was good and there were many dramatic conflicts, nothing felt surprising. The narrative stayed pretty much in the middle, excitement-wise, and many of the struggles and action were telegraphed in advance. The characters felt like players throughout the story instead of becoming people that I cared about, making it feel a bit clinical.

The Bottom Line: This book is a solid read with very helpful and insightful look at immigrants generally and Muslims in particular. Don't think that it will feel like a lecture, because it certainly doesn't come across that way. There's plenty of goings-on to keep the reader interested.

Out of Nowhere by Maria Padian was published today by Knopf Books for Young Readers. A free copy of this book was given to Ink and Page in return for an honest review. Big thanks to NetGalley and the Publisher.

Genre: Young Adult Fiction Contemporary
Ages: 14 and up
You Might Want to Know: There is profanity, underage drinking and drugs

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