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Burning Sunlight

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

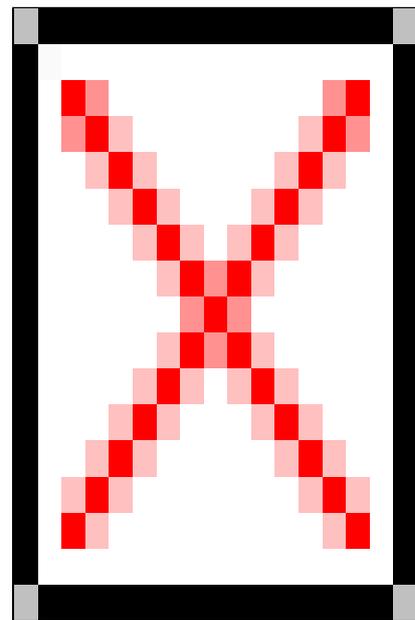
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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4



On the face of it this is an unlikely story. Twelve-year old Zaynab, hijab-wearing and fresh from Somaliland, is now living in Devon with her scientist father following the death of her much-loved activist mother. Haughty, outspoken, and already effortlessly proficient in spoken English, she and her only new school friend quiet, shy but ultimately heroic Lucas, still manage to organise a Climate Change rebellion so successful it ends with the resignation of a dodgy Cabinet Minister. The last pages, where everyone present, adult and child, pour congratulations onto this odd couple are well in the tradition of Enid Blyton's fantasy-flattering endings.

But what still manages to sustain this narrative successfully throughout is Zaynab's fury about the way Climate Change has wrecked her home country. It is hard to imagine any other text written for children at the moment as fiercely eloquent about the damage being done to parts of our planet. It does not really matter that characters tend to be two-dimensional, there to express opinions rather than personality, although Zaynab's long-suffering headmistress is an exception here? wise as well as commanding.

Because everything that Zaynab has to say rings unfortunately true, put over in simple but effective terms that while forceful never descend into preaching. The half-hearted reactions she receives until the campaign really gets under way are also sadly typical. But here is a novel that might actually lead to some change, at least in attitudes, and as such it deserves its welcome. The front cover features six slightly raised badges, each signifying a determination to break away from oil products. After finishing this story, scorching in more ways than one, young readers may well want to search out for real badges carrying the same sort of message.

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