



Where You Belong

By Mary Ann McGuigan

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Evicted from their apartment and forced to seek refuge at Aunt Maggie's crowded lodgings with her mother and siblings, thirteen-year-old Fiona flees to a nearby all-black neighborhood where her best friend, Yolanda Baker, lives, in a story of interracial friendship set against the backdrop of the civil rights era.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Fiona doesn't know where she belongs. When her mother is evicted from their Bronx apartment in New York, she tries to return to her father's house--only to flee one of his drunken rages the first night back. Alone, she wanders the streets until--by chance--she bumps into an old classmate. Yolanda seems to understand her pain. Misfits, both girls search for belonging. Will they find it in each other? ... even though one is black and the other is white? Mary Ann McGuigan deftly explores how racism riddles the lives of these characters in New York during the early '60s, leaving readers hopeful about friendship's power to bridge chasms--perceived and real.

From Publishers Weekly

In this National Book Award nominee, Irish-Catholic Fiona, running away from an abusive father in 1963, takes refuge with her African American friend Yolanda. Ages 10-14.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 5-8. Fleeing her abusive husband, Fiona's mother has found a safe place for herself and her four children in their Bronx neighborhood until they are evicted. Now, they face having to board once again with the woman's sister and her six children. Humiliated, Fiona, 13, goes with her older brother, Liam, to stay with their father. She is the one person in the family whom he has never hit, but when it appears that that too may change, Fiona runs away. Her flight takes her into a black neighborhood where she is spotted by Yolanda, a former classmate who takes her under her wing. Yolanda's family circumstances puzzle Fiona, and some of the adventures the girls have both frighten and excite her. But despite her Irish family's prejudices against "coloreds," Fiona's relationship with Yolanda becomes very important to her. After being reunited with her family, Fiona must defy her mother to visit her injured friend in the hospital. If she has learned one thing from Yolanda, it is that if she doesn't stand up for herself, no one will. Fiona's first-person narrative seems at first too mature and self-observant, but as her experiences unfold, the narrator's voice fits her better and better. Set in 1963, this novel brings the girls' very different worlds to life, and the attitudes expressed by the various characters seem authentic as well. The picture of a family nearly destroyed by alcoholism rings true and the presence of drugs in these changing neighborhoods (while very tame by today's standards) adds a note of realism. Only Fiona and Yolanda emerge fully as real, textured characters; nonetheless, the story is an exciting one. Linda Greengrass, Bank Street College Library, New York City

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Users Review

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