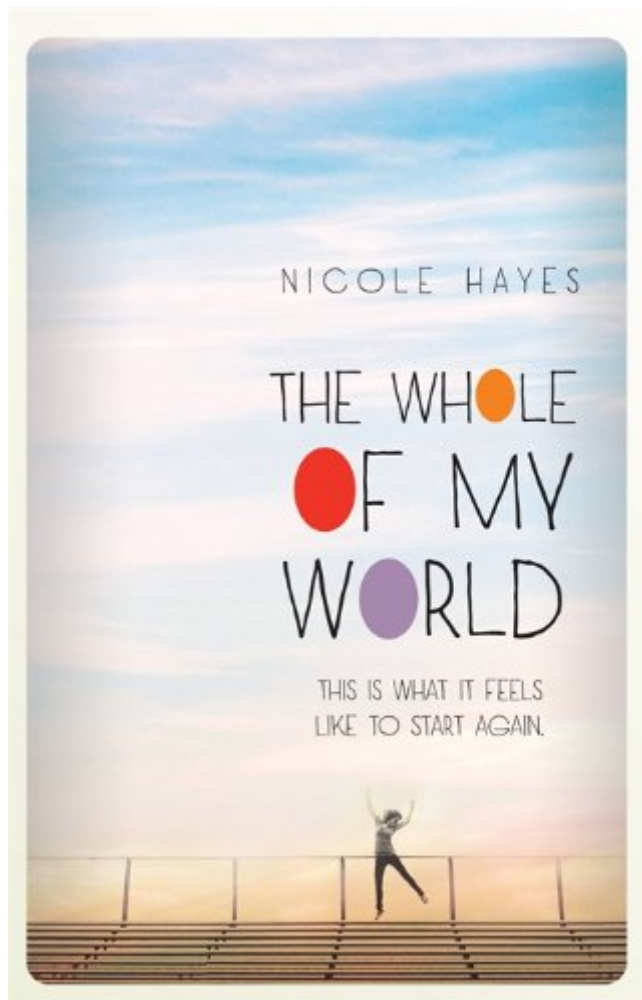


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The Whole Of My World



Synopsis

An unputdownable novel for anyone who's ever loved or lost, drawn a line between then and now, or kept a secret that wouldn't stay hidden . . . 'Today I am free. No guilt for who's missing, what's been left behind. My face aches from smiling in the wind and my voice rasps from all the screaming, and I know that it's been forever since I've felt so completely alive.' Desperate to escape her grieving father and harbouring her own terrible secret, Shelley disappears into the intoxicating world of AFL. Joining a motley crew of footy tragics - and, best of all, making friends with one of the star players - Shelley finds somewhere to belong. Finally she's winning. So why don't her friends get it? Josh, who she's known all her life, but who she can barely look at anymore because of the memories of that fateful day. Tara, whose cold silences Shelley can't understand. Everyone thinks there's something more going on between Shelley and Mick. But there isn't - is there? When the whole of your world is football, sometimes life gets lost between goals.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was first drawn to THE WHOLE OF MY WORLD because of the cover. Its beautiful simplicity. The

colours in the title, the exhilarated girl and that gorgeous tagline, "This is what it feels like to start again". I bought it as soon as it launched. Then I found out it was about football. I don't hate football. Indifferent or disinterested may be better words to describe how I feel about the sport. I know it - grew up in a large family full of football crazies, split between Collingwood and Essendon. I inherited Essendon. Nevertheless, I never caught the fever, never felt the magic. Also, I'm one of the people who have been turned off the sport because of alleged and reported bad behaviour of players. So this book, dubbed "The football book", sat in my kindle until Grand Final Day. That morning I read an article written by the author on mamamia.com. It was to encourage women to get into the spirit of the day and watch the game. It didn't make me want to watch the game, but it made we want to read her book. Immediately. So, as the first ball of the game bounced, I began reading. The first thing I realised was, the book is not about football. As the title and cover promises, it is about so much more. It's a story that delves deeply into a character's soul. She carries you on her journey, so close to her heart you feel her every emotion. It is so cleverly done, so beautifully written, I couldn't stop reading. It reminded me why interests or hobbies such as football, or anything someone feels passionately about, are so important. Having a passion gives someone something to grip hold of, something to dream of, to live for. It can be an escape when life is difficult. I refuse to write spoiling reviews so I will stop there. But, if you have reservations about this book like I did, because you aren't into football, put them aside and dive in. Reading THE WHOLE OF MY WORLD is an entertaining, uplifting and enriching experience. I loved every minute of it.

Right up front I want to say this is not yet another novel about a fan and his or her love for a sports team. This is a beautifully written book about a young girl growing up after a family crisis (you're told that fairly early on - but I don't want to say too much more). You'll find no plot or character cliches here. Instead, this is an insightful book about the challenges some of us have to face. Having said that, there's nothing wrong with a bit of sport too! And so it's all presented against the fabulous backdrop of Aussie rules football. Shelley is an avid fan of the Falcons (a fictional team, but so obviously the Hawks are the current reigning premiers) to the point where it becomes the whole of her world. But there's more to her world than that. Nicole Hayes has done a wonderful job of portraying Shelley, Tara, Mick Edwards and the many other great and very Australian characters in her book. All that's left for me to say is, this is one of those young adult novels that crosses the age groups - you will love it no matter

your age. I bought a copy for my wife, who loved it and went out and bought more copies for her friends, and I have now read it myself. 'The Whole of My World' kicks goals. And then some.

Full disclosure. I know the author. But I never got to read the book before actually purchasing it myself. And it's a terrible position to be in when you read a fellow writer's work and you know, just know, that, being the curmudgeon you are, you're going to have to lie to them a little bit to avoid stomping on their dreams, because it just never happens that the work is that good. Well, more fool me, because *The Whole of My World* proved to be the work that released me from the quasi-horror of providing peer feedback, it was that good. Beautifully written, funny, moving, a gentle narrative that takes its central characters on transforming journeys, and a very real depiction of an era in not just time, but universal experience. All of this adds up to a sensational debut novel, an absorbing read whether you're the intended audience, or as far away from it as you could be, like I am. Is this high art? No. Nor does it want to be. It's honest and heartfelt, and delivers on every intended level. Seriously do yourself a favour and pick up a copy of *The Whole of My World*, if not for yourself, then for someone who you know enjoys a good book. And if there are any school curriculum planners out there hunting for that ideal contemporary Australian novel to add to their reading list; you just found it. Congrats, Nicole!

On the face of it the book explores traditional themes of growing up, relationships and loss but is unique in that the focus is on Aussie Rules football and the fanatical fans who follow the game. I loved how Shelley (the main character) is a normal teenager (whatever that is) in that she is insecure, has problems at school but also that she is physically strong from playing the game and athletics. She is the equal of the boys in this respect. The book also 'dares' to go into the territory of her falling for one of the players and how this is inappropriate and yet we understand why and are not too condemnatory of him either....perhaps we even feel a little sorry for the guy? And then there is the incident that has defined Shelley and her father's relationship...I particularly identified with the irrationality of being a sports fan...how it's so important despite its lack of importance. Shelley's friend, Tara and her beautifully irrational superstitions are a highlight of the book. Great book for teenagers and adults.

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