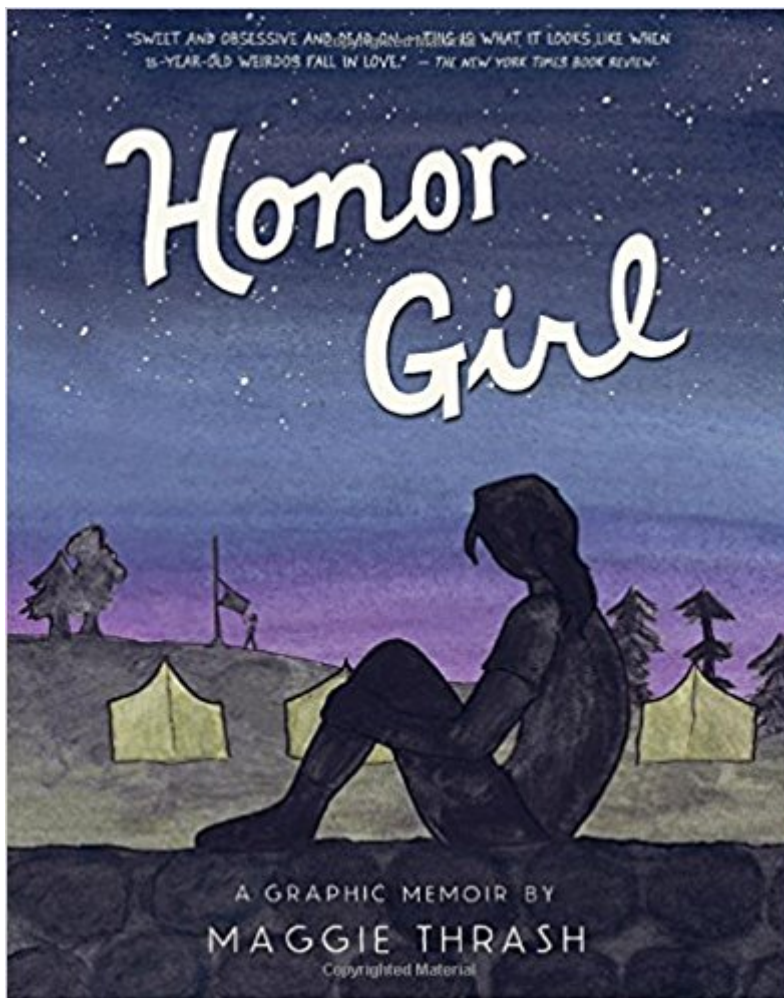


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Honor Girl: A Graphic Memoir



Synopsis

All-girl camp. First love. First heartbreak. At once romantic and devastating, brutally honest and full of humor, this graphic-novel memoir is a debut of the rarest sort. Maggie Thrash has spent basically every summer of her fifteen-year-old life at the one-hundred-year-old Camp Bellflower for Girls, set deep in the heart of Appalachia. She's from Atlanta, she's never kissed a guy, she's into Backstreet Boys in a really deep way, and her long summer days are full of a pleasant, peaceful nothing . . . until one confounding moment. A split-second of innocent physical contact pulls Maggie into a gut-twisting love for an older, wiser, and most surprising of all (at least to Maggie), female counselor named Erin. But Camp Bellflower is an impossible place for a girl to fall in love with another girl, and Maggie's savant-like proficiency at the camp's rifle range is the only thing keeping her heart from exploding. When it seems as if Erin maybe feels the same way about Maggie, it's too much for both Maggie and Camp Bellflower to handle, let alone to understand.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up • In this poignant memoir, Thrash examines a pivotal summer, marked by first love, self-discovery, and some difficult realizations. At age 15, Maggie returned to Camp Bellflower for Girls, a Christian camp located in Kentucky that she'd been attending for years, and fell in love with Erin, an older counselor. She encountered hostility from narrow-minded fellow campers and adults alike, both for her same-sex attraction and for her general refusal to toe the line when she proved to be a more skilled marksman than another girl. Although she long aspired to be named Honor Girl (a

distinction that each year went to the girl who most exemplified the camp's spirit), she soon began to see her seemingly fun-filled, carefree world as tight and constricting and to realize she possessed the power to forge her own identity. Like Mariko and Jillian Tamaki, authors of *This One Summer* (First Second, 2014), Thrash has a gift for imbuing everyday, slice-of-life moments with deeper meaning, and she effortlessly conveys the awkwardness of coming into one's own. The tone is spot-on, varying from funny and quirky to quiet and contemplative, and Thrash seamlessly weaves in light, turn-of-the-millennium pop culture touchstones like the Backstreet Boys with darker historical references (the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy). Brief interludes of heartfelt, intimately wrought text appear alongside or in between panels, and the art is raw, sketchbooklike. Readers will feel as though they're opening a scrapbook or journal rather than a more formal autobiography.

VERDICT An insightful and thought-provoking work. —Mahnaz Dar, *School Library Journal*

--This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

In this graphic memoir, Thrash writes with confidence and skill remarkable for a debut. The New York Times Thrash's remembrances are evinced with clear, wide-eyed illustrations colored with a dreamily vibrant palette. She has so carefully and skillfully captured a universal moment—the first time one realizes that things will never be the same—that readers will find her story captivating. A luminescent memoir not to be missed. —Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

In this poignant memoir, Thrash examines a pivotal summer, marked by first love, self-discovery, and some difficult realizations... The tone is spot-on, varying from funny and quirky to quiet and contemplative, and Thrash seamlessly weaves in light, turn-of-the-millennium pop culture touchstones like the Backstreet Boys with darker historical references (the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy)... An insightful and thought-provoking work. —School Library Journal (starred review)

Thrash writes with an intoxicating mix of candor, irony, and fresh passion. Much of the memoir's piquancy comes from the collisions between the camp's ideal of Southern womanhood, the campers' clannishness, and Maggie's faith in herself as she becomes, incongruously, the camp's best rifle shot. This is the kind of memoir that stays with readers for days. —Publishers Weekly (starred review)

Thrash's unvarnished retelling of her adolescent experience is neither glamourizing nor self-deprecating—and the salty realism makes the story engrossing and quite funny. Though lesbian and questioning teens may be especially responsive to the narrative, any young reader will see in Maggie and her friends a relatable sort of confident confusion. —Shelf Awareness (starred review)

This honest, raw, and touching graphic memoir will resonate with teens coming to terms with identities of

all stripes, regardless of sexual orientation.

•Booklist This is immediately engrossing, both poignant and hilarious, as the personable and likeable Maggie nails typical adolescent experiences with particularly wicked camp descriptions. While loosely based on the author's circumstances, Maggie's portrayal of her first love and heartbreak is everyone's story, whether gay or straight, male or female. Maggie's emotions are sharply honest, with readers feeling her exhilaration, anxiety, awkwardness, confusion, and pain.

•VOYA In this graphic novel, deceptively simple drawings in a mostly dreamy palette work well to capture big, sweeping emotions of the camp experience...

•Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books Readers may recognize themselves in Maggie's halting steps toward adulthood and self-awareness...

•Literacy Daily Thrash's graphic memoir presents a love story with which every reader will be able to identify... Honor Girl will be a page-turner leaving readers with many unresolved questions, a scenario familiar to LGBT and straight teens alike.

•School Library Connection [Wipes away tear.] Honor Girl is, all at once, heartachey (but never precious), dry-witted (but not cynical), and incredibly beautiful. Maggie Thrash has not only given us a unique addition to the canon of intelligent-young-woman-centered comics, but a reminder of the rewards of opening yourself up and exposing your own vulnerability

œ in love and in writing.

•Tavi Gevinson Though I am neither a teenage girl nor a lesbian, I found this story super-real and relatable.

•Ira Glass, host of This American Life Honest, funny, and so real you can smell summer camp while you read it, Maggie Thrash's Honor Girl hits dead center.

•A.S. King, award-winning author of Ask the Passengers and Glory O'Brien's History of the Future Honor Girl beautifully portrays the awkward excitement and heartbreak of first and forbidden love. I couldn't put it down, even while my heart was aching. I loved this book!

•Jo Knowles, author of See You at Harry's and Read Between the Lines

I was really intrigued by the premise of this graphic memoir, and ordered it on the day it came out. It definitely didn't disappoint. Honor Girl, by Maggie Thrash, is the true story of a summer she spent at camp when she was fifteen. During this particular summer, she meets a female counselor and begins to have feelings for her. This is the first time she's had any feelings for a girl, and since Maggie's a camper, they have to be careful in their interactions. The result is a beautiful coming of age story about first love, the way you see the world at fifteen, summertime, friendship, and self discovery. I found the story very realistic and moving, and you could definitely tell it was a memoir. The way the girls acted, spoke and felt was very relatable and very real to those feelings you have as a teenager. There were a lot of fun moments too, several of which had me laughing out loud. It

was a perfect balance with the angst and serious undertone. Once I started reading, this was pretty much all I could think about until I finished. It's one of those very immersive stories, where you really feel like you are outdoors at summer camp with the other girls. This is a book I would definitely love to reread every summer. The artwork was also beautiful. I love the cover of the book, and true to it, the colors inside don't disappoint. They look like watercolors, and there were several pages I flipped back to look at when I was done reading, particularly the full page illustrations and nighttime scenes. The people were a little sketchy styled for my taste, just because it was harder to read emotion in their facial expressions, but it didn't detract from the story at all. Overall, I definitely give this a 5/5 stars. It's a perfect summer read, and perfect for fans of contemporary graphic novels. Think along the lines of *This One Summer*. If you've ever questioned who you were, or struggled to figure out who you want to be, you will love this story.

I love graphic novels, especially memoirs, so this was almost guaranteed to be enjoyable. Maggie Thrash is new to me but I will be eagerly awaiting anything more from her in the future! Her artwork is brilliant and the storytelling was fantastic, actually making a serene all girl camp seem exciting. The 2000 era was post-collegiate for me and I've gotta say, the pop culture references here had me cracking up and thanking my lucky stars I went through my awkward teenage years during the early 1990s instead. This book in hardcover is very large and thick and lovely. I recommend this purchase wholeheartedly, and it's rare for me to spring for full price on a graphic novel (just sayin').

I don't know what I was expecting when I bought this. I was a bit skeptical of the art, which looked overly simplistic, and the story had the potential to be overwrought or preachy. I couldn't have been more wrong. First, the writing (plot, pacing and prose) is absolutely perfect. This book couldn't be more true-to-life, more touching or more engaging. You don't just feel like you are reading "about" Maggie --- the story is so engaging that you feel like you "are" Maggie. You feel what she feels and it takes you straight back to adolescence, whether you are male or female, gay or straight. The story is so engaging that you really yearn for resolution and a happy ending. Without wanting to say too much, the ending was perfect. Frustrating in some ways, but it packed an emotional punch that stays with you long after the book is over. (Which, by the way, is all too soon. I devoured this in a single sitting.) As a side note, it was refreshing and heart-warming to see how supportive Maggie's friends were, even in a setting that you would expect to promote the opposite reaction. As the father of two daughters, I have seen the opposite all too often, and I can only hope that they grow up to have friends like Maggie's. Second, the art is really perfect. It reinforces the feeling of "camp". You

feel like it was drawn by 15 year-old Maggie (although a closer look reveals subtlety you would not expect of a 15 year-old), so it seems authentic and not artificial. In particular, the colors in the book are warm, soft and imbue the scenes with a glow that heightens the emotional reaction to the book. I only wish this weren't Maggie Thrash's first book. I would order anything else she has written on the spot if I could...Highly recommended!!!

A very engaging book with easy to read appeal for all ages. Maggie captures the adolescent angst that we all remember, and her dead on repartee with her friends, family and non-friends rings so true. The illustrations capture all of the moods and fill in the blanks around the dialog.

Honor Girl was such a pleasant surprise. Even though I'm of an older generation than the author, I can certainly relate to those intense feelings of a first love and the angst of youth. I went to an all-girls school and remember well how we interacted - for good or ill. This book captures that as well. It was a pleasure to read, and I will be looking for more books by the talented up-and-coming Ms. Thrash. PS: The art work looks like a 15 year old drew it so it fits the book perfectly.

Fabulous, touching story.

great graphics

I couldn't seem to put it down. It was lovely and made me feel all those gushy teenage feelings and eventually broke my heart.

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