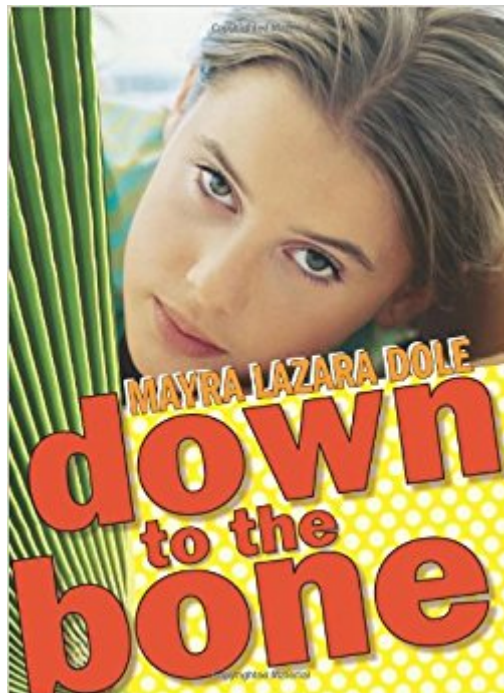


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Down To The Bone



Synopsis

This is a HarperTeen first edition. It is different from new, Bella Books paperback and Kindle edition with black cover where girls are a breath away from kissing. This HarperTeen edition was written for reluctant readers, middle graders and very young teens. If interested in a changed, updated, rewritten, augmented edition with the same title for an older audience, please find the other version.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up
When a nun at her Catholic school confiscates and reads aloud in class a note to Laura Amores from another girl, declaring her love, the teen is kicked out of her school and her home. Soon after, Laura's devoted girlfriend yields to family pressure and accepts a marriage proposal. Abandoned, heartbroken, and confused, Laura takes refuge with another friend and struggles to find a home and identity in both the straight and the gay world. Her story isn't uncommon in the queer-teen-lit canon, but Dole's infusion of lively, spicy Cuban-American culture set against a hot Miami setting makes it rise above many other titles in the genre. While some of the action occasionally feels blunt and forced, Laura's unique, spunky attitude fleshes out the more dramatic bits and keeps the pages turning. Readers will relish the teen's descriptions of the food, fury, and passion that make up her life. Dole captivantly colors Laura and her entourage with a rainbow of multicultural dialects, bits of Spanish, and slang. Teens will cheer for Laura in her

struggle to find herself and a family. —Hillias J. Martin, New York Public Library Copyright
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Starred Review After being expelled from her Catholic school for being lesbian, Lauri, 17, is thrown out by her Cuban mom for being “abnormal.” Worst of all, Lauri’s beloved partner, Marlana, leaves and does her family’s bidding by marrying a man. Lauri gets a job and finds a home with her straight, black friend, Soli, and she begins to wonder if she can fall in love with a guy and regain her family and acceptance. At the same time she has her own prejudices to overcome. The dialogue is fast and funny in this debut novel, which is set in Miami’s Cuban American community. Laura’s first-person, present-tense narrative shows and tells the farce and the sorrow at home, and teens will recognize some of the traditional prejudices, as well as the joy of friendship and the happiness of real love (“my smile barely fits in my face”). Supportive precisely because it is laugh-out-loud irreverent (in one hilarious scene Laura and Soli mock their tacky quinceañeras with their pink-ruffled gowns), this breakthrough novel is sure to be welcomed. Grades 9-12. —Hazel Rochman

Down to the Bone by Mayra Lazara Dole is a great young adult book to read for anyone who likes drama, action, and romance. The book starts with a difficult situation so the reader will get hooked right away and will not want to put it down until the last page. The main character, Laura, is a 16 year old Latina girl who lives in Miami. She gets kicked out of her house, expelled from school and deserted by her friends, all because she has fallen in love with a girl. The reader follows her as she works to rebuild her life. Laura struggles with setbacks as her lesbian identity clashes with the values of people around her, including her Cuban American mother. Laura’s friends are Tazer, a transgender girl that she meets at the beach and Soli her best friend who sticks with her through this whole ordeal. Her little brother is also an important character. Laura and her little brother love each other very much. She knows how much he misses her when she is kicked out of the house so she secretly visits him and makes calls to him when she can. The ending isn’t perfect but at least the reader doesn’t have to worry about whether or not Laura will be okay. Dole wrote this book so that Laura tells her story in the first person. She uses a lot of detail so that it feels like you are actually listening to Laura telling you what is happening. Laura talks about herself and what she looks like at the very beginning so it is like she is introducing herself but she does it just by talking about getting ready for school. Also, the details are unusual and make you want to know more starting with the first line of the whole book.

“This morning the sun rose like a loaf of sweet banana bread” (1). She uses a lot of conversation too so you always know what all of the characters are thinking and saying to each other. This style makes this a very interesting book. I don’t know much about Latino culture but I felt like I was almost part of it when I was reading. I felt like I was in the story with Laura and could be one of her friends. I think if you were part of this culture would enjoy the book even more. For example, you would understand the words like “tortillera” that are used to insult Laura. Another part of culture that Dole focuses on is what it is like to be a lesbian teenager especially in the Cuban American part of Miami. I read a blog interview by Malinda Lo where she asked the author about that part. Dole said that she used her own experiences as a Cuban American lesbian in Miami but she also used a focus group of LGBT teenagers to make sure she was getting all the details right. The book is definitely about LGBT issues so it is best for people who are interested in reading about those topics. This is a good book for young adults of all ages.

Down to the Bone by Mayra Lazara Dole gives us a look at the disenfranchisement of gay and lesbian teens, particularly in the Cuban community. Seventeen year-old Laura has fallen in love with Marlena. They have been involved in a committed relationship for two years, however, neither of their families know. That all changes when Laura is caught reading a love letter from Marlena by one of the nuns at her Catholic high school. Not only does the nun retrieve the letter, she reads it to the entire class. Immediately, Laura becomes an outcast in the eyes of her friends. When she goes home she discovers that her mother was notified and she is immediately cast from her home. Laura goes to live with her friend, Soli and her mother, Viva, who are more open-minded and loving but she never stops yearning to go home. Laura is unable to tell anyone that she is a lesbian, so for most of the novel she lives a closeted lifestyle. The reader is allowed to feel Laura’s pain as she loses the people in her life and also her joy as she matures. Down to the Bone was filled with the angst and drama young people endure when their lifestyle choices are different than their families expect. Ms. Dole does a fine job of allowing us a peek into the Cuban, gay and lesbian teen culture without ever being sexually titillating or graphic. The author also provides us a clear view of the pain these teens must go through to be themselves. I recommend Down to the Bone to teens older than sixteen and other readers who can learn from the subject matter. Angelia MenchanAPOOOO BookClub

At 17, Laura Amores is a Cuban teenager in Miami who attends a Catholic high school. But when

she is caught reading a letter from a friend and not paying attention to the class, the nun reads the letter aloud. Turns out, the missive is from Laura's girlfriend, and details an intimate relationship Laura has kept hidden from everyone. Suddenly friends Laura has known her whole life turn on her. Her own mother is mortified at her immoral behavior and throws her out of the house, refusing to speak to or even see her until she decides to become straight. Even the girlfriend seems to buy into that mentality, returning to Puerto Rico when her brother discovers their relationship and choosing to settle down into a loveless marriage instead of fighting for her heart's desire. The only people who stick by Laura is her childhood friend, Soli, and Soli's mother, Viva. They take her in when she has nowhere left to go, and they love her unconditionally. Soli, an over-the-top hairdresser with a zest for life, tries to convince Laura to embrace her sexuality. But the pain of being outed in front of her classmates, coupled with being shunned by her own family, has left Laura confused. If she weren't gay, none of this would have happened. This story is a wonderful look at the confusion that many feel when they're on the path to discovering their own sexuality. Laura denies that she is gay -- her belief is that she was in love with a girl, but she can't say the words out loud, even to her new queer circle of friends, for fear of a rejection similar to that she suffered when she was first outed. So instead, she vacillates between a growing attraction to a beautiful girl she meets at a gay club and the desire to be accepted as "normal" and "straight." Throw in a growing friendship with a confident lesbian who self-identifies as a "boi," Soli's unrelenting pressure to own up to her own heart, and her mother's continuous cold shoulder, and the reader will find it hard to put this book down until the very end. Laura's journey rings true. Many times I found myself frustrated with her, only because she couldn't readily embrace who she was, but I had to keep reminding myself she was only 17. The road to self-acceptance is a hard one, for anybody, and the author doesn't go easy on her character. Laura is torn apart emotionally, her life a roller coaster that anyone who remembers their own turbulent teenage years will identify with all too well. When she finally begins to figure things out for herself, the change is vividly written: "Something comes over me. I feel as if I've finally taken off a tight iron mask that I've been wearing all my life." "It's about finally letting go of the fear that didn't allow me to be who I truly am." There is something for everyone in Laura's story, whether gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, genderqueer, or questioning. Through her tale, she grows into a stronger person, more sure of herself and her heart. In the final pages of this book is a lesson we can all embrace, an acceptance not only of ourselves but of others around us, as different as they may be. Laura learns to embrace her sexuality ~ and, through the process, learns who loves her unconditionally and, in return, is deserving of her love.

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