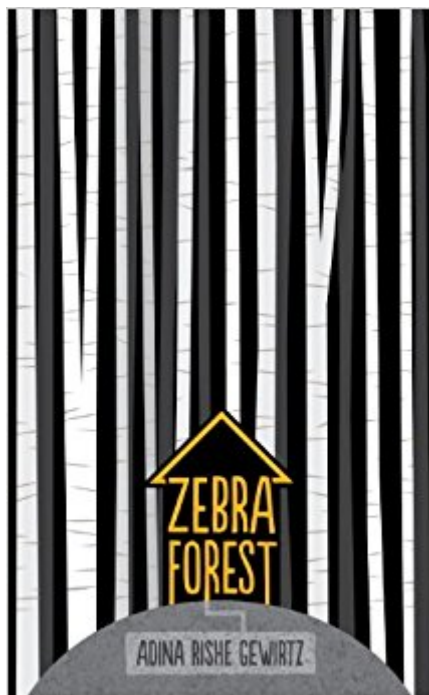


The book was found

# Zebra Forest



## Synopsis

In an extraordinary debut novel, an escaped fugitive upends everything two siblings think they know about their family, their past, and themselves. When eleven-year-old Annie first started lying to her social worker, she had been taught by an expert: Gran. "If you're going to do something, make sure you do it with excellence," Gran would say. That was when Gran was feeling talkative, and not brooding for days in her room — like she did after telling Annie and her little brother, Rew, the one thing they know about their father: that he was killed in a fight with an angry man who was sent away. Annie tells stories, too, as she and Rew laze under the birches and oaks of Zebra Forest — stories about their father the pirate, or pilot, or secret agent. But then something shocking happens to unravel all their stories: a rattling at the back door, an escapee from the prison holding them hostage in their own home, four lives that will never be the same. Driven by suspense and psychological intrigue, *Zebra Forest* deftly portrays an unfolding standoff of truth against family secrets — and offers an affecting look at two resourceful, imaginative kids as they react and adapt to the hand they've been dealt.

From ZEBRA FOREST We called it the Zebra Forest because it looked like a zebra. Its trees were a mix of white birch and chocolate oak, and if you stood a little ways from it, like at our house looking across the back field that was our yard, you saw stripes, black and white, that went up into green. Gran never went out there except near dusk, when the shadows gathered. She didn't like to be out in full sunlight usually, and told me once she didn't like the lines the trees made. Gran was always saying stuff like that. Perfectly beautiful things — like a clean blue sky over the Zebra — made tears come to her eyes, and if I tried to get her to come outside with me, she'd duck her head and hurry upstairs to bed. But then it would be storming, lightning sizzling the tops of the trees, and she'd run round the house, cheerful, making us hot cocoa and frying up pancakes and warming us with old quilts. We had few rules in our house, but keeping out of the Zebra Forest in a storm was one of them.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 750L (What's this?)

Paperback: 208 pages

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Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.6 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 42 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #86,594 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #94 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Illness #196 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Fiction #502 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Siblings

Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of the Month, April 2013: Eleven-year-old Annie and her younger brother, Rew, have long wondered what their father was like. All they know is what Gran told them--that he died in a fight--but Gran is an unreliable narrator at best. Life was already unraveling when a sudden turn of events shatters what little stability remained and relationships are questioned, lies exposed, and both children suddenly have to grow up even more than they already have. Zebra Forest is a slim, suspense-filled novel that speaks volumes about family stories riddled with secrets, betrayal in the name of love, and finding forgiveness.--Seira Wilson --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Gr 5-8-It's almost summer and 11-year-old Annie Morgan has a small list of things she hopes to accomplish during her vacation: grow tall, have an adventure, and meet her father. Sadly, the last wish is impossible given her father's death in a brutal fight many years before. Annie and her younger brother, Rew, live with their caring, but mentally unstable, grandmother in the backwoods of Sunshine. The siblings pass the time in the "Zebra Forest" of birches and oaks behind their house, weaving elaborate fantasies of their dad as a pirate or secret agent. When a prison escapee barges into their house and holds them hostage, the siblings are shocked to discover that the interloper is their presumed-dead father, Andrew Snow. Gran's fragile state renders her incapable of helping the children process this revelation. Rew lashes out against his captor, refusing to believe that this man is his dad. Annie is torn between siding with her brother and her desire to know their father. Gewirtz veers away from melodrama, deftly capturing nuances of family dynamics in spare prose. Another notable element is the thematic parallel with Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, which the children read throughout the story. Despite Zebra Forest's slow start, audiences will appreciate this novel's multilayered characters and touching message of hope and forgiveness.-Lalitha Nataraj,

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Labeling *\_Zebra Forest\_* a children's book is like calling *\_To Kill a Mockingbird\_* or *\_Huckleberry Finn\_* children's stories. Yes, the main characters are children. Yes, sex and bad language are absent. Yes, children will love it. The story zings along fast enough to meet modern expectations. But like Harper Lee's and Mark Twain's classics, *\_Zebra Forest\_* shares attributes of the very best literature. All of the characters are portrayed as three-dimensional, realistic people. Ms. Gewitz lovingly reveals the family dynamics as mother, son and grandchildren struggle to understand and accept the revelation of long-held secrets. This beautifully written, coming-of-age story will touch your heart and remain in your mind. I hope teachers adopt the book for use in their classrooms; *\_Zebra Forest\_* has the makings of a modern classic. I can't wait for the next book by Adina Rishe Gewitz.

Some reviewers seem to find the themes too mature for young readers. I couldn't disagree more. The author handles difficult and sensitive topics with real grace, and the story itself is very compelling. The whole book runs about 200 pages and is broken into short chapters, making it a good candidate for challenged middle school readers who want something gritty and real that will hold their attention. Despite the fact that the book deals with such issues as imprisonment and child abandonment, and includes some scenes that border on violence, it never crosses the line and remarkably--given the content--includes no profane language. The characters, particularly the hero Annie and her younger brother Rew, are interesting and three-dimensional. I loved Annie's determined quest for the truth about her father, and her willingness to face whatever that truth might be--not easy for a young girl who discovers that the father she thought was dead has actually been in prison for killing a man. I also loved Rew's understandable outrage and courageous determination to break free when the children are held prisoner in their home. Overall, an entertaining and engaging book--and also refreshingly different from most fare for young readers.

It was refreshing to see a novel geared towards middle-school students that was not a cookie-cutter formulaic title. Gewirtz has written a quality and engaging novel - my 11 year old son could not put it down, and devoured the book in one sitting! He said he loved it. We can't wait for the next one!

This was an excellent debut story of a young girl dealing with a less than perfect life. Her younger brother has anger/impulse control issues and her grandmother struggles with depression that shows itself in hoarding and isolation. She accepts her life, adapting and making do. Her life takes a dramatic turn when there is a prison break which brings her little family face to face with the past. A parallel is drawn between her situation and the history of the time which is the Iran hostage crisis. I found it to be well done and overall believable. I would recommend it to 12 years and up.

I absolutely loved this book! I am an eleven year old reader. I think anybody who is nine and older should be able to read and understand this book. The only reason that I took away a star is because the middle is a little slow when the kids are being held captive. Thank you for your time, Sammy

I received the pkg in very good condition. It was a birthday gift for my granddaughter who is 11. When she saw the book she said she had hoped someone would buy it for her birthday. it was an interesting book for her to read. She is not finished it reading it yet but when she is done I'll know how good the book was.

As a teacher, I used this book along side Wonder to do a character study. It is a wonderfully engaging book, and every child can see themselves in some way reflected through Ren or Annie.

I gave this book to my granddaughters, and they read it in two days. They loved the book, and said Mom-Mom, when are you getting us another book???? Needless to say, I will shopping for books here soon. Summer is coming, and they get bored. Nothing better than reading for them, especially when they LOVE the book.

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