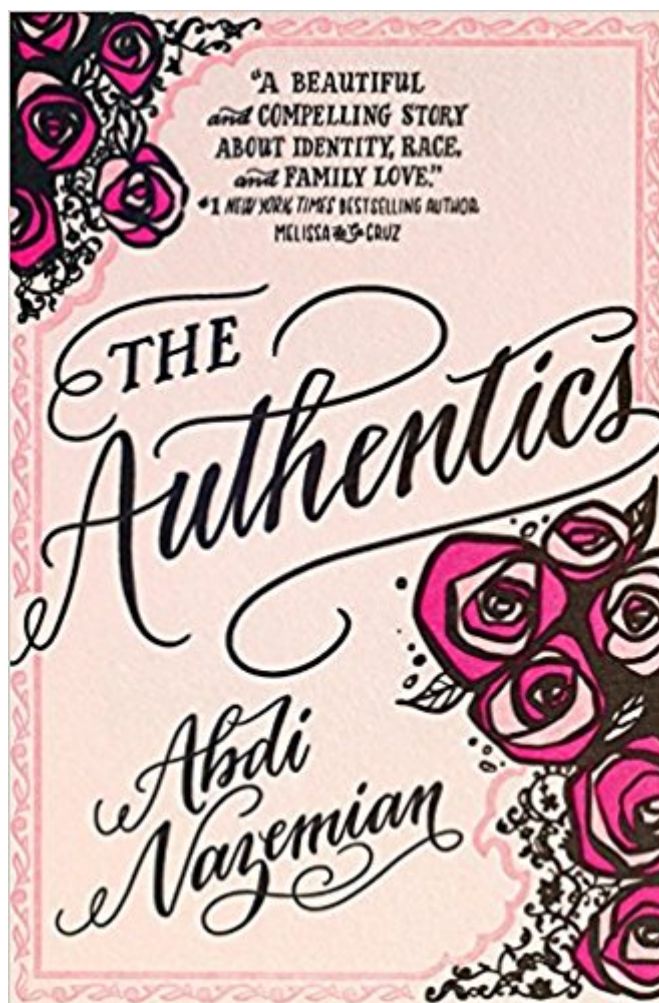


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The Authentics



Synopsis

The Authentics is a fresh, funny, and insightful novel about culture, love, and family—the kind we are born into and the ones we create. Daria Esfandiyar is Iranian-American and proud of her heritage, unlike some of the “Nose Jobs” in the clique led by her former best friend, Heidi Javadi. Daria and her friends call themselves the Authentics, because they pride themselves on always keeping it real. But in the course of researching a school project, Daria learns something shocking about her past, which launches her on a journey of self-discovery. It seems everyone is keeping secrets. And it’s getting harder to know who she even is any longer. With infighting among the Authentics, her mother planning an over-the-top sweet sixteen party, and a romance that should be totally off limits, Daria doesn’t have time for this identity crisis. As everything in her life is spinning out of control—can she figure out how to stay true to herself?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“As with the novels of Benjamin Alire Saenz or Randa Abdel-Fattah, Daria’s thought-provoking journey will resonate with teen readers of all backgrounds.” (Booklist (starred review)) “The ferociously authentic Daria is a memorable protagonist.” (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) “A beautiful and compelling story about identity, race, and family love. A must read in an age where #weneeddiversebooks more than ever.” (Melissa de la Cruz, New York Times bestselling author) “A charming and touching examination of everything that makes us who we are.” (Adi Alsaid, author of Let’s Get Lost and Never

Always Sometimes)“Will resonate with readers who have felt like they don’t know where they belong or who they want to be, and certainly with the children of immigrants who feel caught between worlds.” (Publishers Weekly)

I received an ARC from Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins in exchange for an honest review. I was excited to dive into this one because of the evident diversity. It’s something that I’m really looking to read more about, so I was glad that this was packed full of it. Really. Daria is in a group with her three friends - Kurt, Joy, and Caroline - and they call each other the Authentics because they claim they aren’t fake. They don’t tell lies. They are themselves amongst plastic people in Los Angeles. It all changes when she finds out from a DNA test that she has ancestry in Mexico - 50% of it. So, who is she? I really liked Daria’s character. She is only fifteen years old and the way she tries to handle every piece of chaos around her shows that she is well beyond her years. She has a mother that seems to care too much about labels and appearance. Her brother is gay, married, and expecting a child. Her father is really the only normal one. She’s never been kissed and she struggles with her appearance like any normal teenager. However, the things that she goes through in this novel are really heavy and it was very fulfilling to read through her journey and how she conquers everything. Her mind is older than her age and it’s simply a breath of fresh air. The diversity in this novel is just amazing. We have a collective amount of cultures in one novel, different sexualities, different attitudes. I have never seen so much diversity in one book and, thankfully, it’s not all piled in there like a mess of mashed potatoes (it just came to me, don’t ask). If you’re looking for a good book with diversity and one that will make you think, you’ve got it right here. It’s truly a vision and something to think about. So, why does it have four stars? Well, there is a section in the novel where she meets Iglesias, a talented graffiti artist who she obviously has a connection with. However, his character building - especially with her - is something I didn’t really appreciate. What I mean to say is that I felt its “resolution” was dry and something considered “unimportant” to the author. I’m not trying to make accusations, but I feel like it should have been changed. It might just be me that thinks this. However, regardless of that matter, I still award this upcoming novel a rave review because it makes you think about other people around you, their cultures, your differences, and even what could be going on in their life that you never thought of. I can tell this will be a good one for fans of diversified reads.

Rating: 4.5 Stars This was such a beautiful journey of self-discovery and appreciation for those who love you and you love back. Daria and her friends always believed they were being authentic, being true to themselves. However, after experiencing an existential crisis, Daria begins to question what it means to be authentic. While trying to work through this situation, she learns a lot about herself, her friends, and her family. This story had me hook, line, and sinker from the very beginning. I loved all four of the Authentics immediately, and was thinking how lucky Daria was to have such an awesome group of friends. The title of this book makes you think it is their story, however, this is Daria's story, and I felt fortunate to join Daria on her journey of self-discovery. I have been lucky enough to read quite a few #OwnVoices books lately, which deal with self-discovery and self-identity. I have also been lucky enough to have enjoyed them all immensely, and am happy to add *The Authentics* to this list. Nazemian gave me so many beautiful relationships to be jealous of in this book. Daria's closest friends -- Joy, Caroline, and Kurt -- are each very special in their own way. They had very different strengths and weaknesses, complementing each other quite well. They were steadfast and dedicated friends, but they were not perfect. We find out that some of them may be hiding a thing or two, but these small transgressions never nullify those super strong bonds of friendship the four of them share. The way each will put the other first is lovely, and I could only wish to have friends like them. Daria's family had a lot of things they needed to work through, but you would never question their love for each other. They didn't always make the best decisions, but they made those decisions with the best intentions. I never had a nanny, but I could only wish I could be lucky enough to have a Lala in my life. This woman exuded love through every pore of her body. She was just the epitome of a caregiver, and I loved every second I got to spend with her. Speaking of family, I love that Nazemian shows that a family is a family even if it is not the traditional family. I equate family with love, and it seems Nazemian agrees with this. Daria's family changed and grew from the beginning of the book to the end of the book, just as Daria herself grew and changed, and all these changes were positive in my opinion. It was interesting to be a witness to all the changes that both Daria and her family experienced. Daria definitely came of age during this tale. One of the things that hit me hardest, was when her mother broke down those walls of protection, and revealed her vulnerability, shared her pain. This changed the way Daria perceived her mother and actually made her more human. I found the commentary about Iran quite interesting. I was in single digits during the Iranian Revolution, so I only remember bits and pieces. The insights Nazemian shared prompted me to find out more, and I think it's great when a book elicits that sort of response from me. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to learn more about Nazemian's culture, and felt he

thoughtfully wove it into this story. It gave this book extra depth and definitely enhanced my reading experience. Overall: I have nothing but love for this tale of friends, family, first love, self love, and self acceptance.

The Authentics by Abdi Nazemian is a joyous experience. Immediately, I was engaged in Daria's life, and her relationships with her friends and family. Nazemian really gets it- the angst and joy of love, whether that be between partners, friends or family. It is this heart that is at the novel's core, and upon that we travel on a fascinating journey of actual discovery and self-discovery. Another aspect of The Authentics that I love is the gateway into Iranian culture and family, told with respect, humor and honesty. This particularly stands out to me because there are not many vehicles that can transport us into Iranian culture while seamlessly interweaving sexuality, race, religion, cultural identity, Los Angeles and high school- while maintaining humor and sincerity. I loved this book. I highly recommend it.

I loved this witty, empathetic and modern story told through the lens of a teenage girl whose sense of self is upended by a surprise revelation about her family. Although it's a YA novel - direct and smartly written - the moving journey of Daria and her curated group of equally unique friends (who call themselves 'the Authentics') really touched a chord. It's about identity, reconciling the pull of the past, and the adventure of walking into the future with fresh eyes. It's also really, really funny.

Incredibly fun and thought provoking read by one of the most inventive authors, a true rising star! His ability to tap into a female voice and a gen z heart while exploring complex issues of identity is masterful, I highly recommend this book!

Another wonderful book by Nazemian, his ability to create vibrant characters is unparalleled. From the first page, you are invited right into Daria's world. Her journey of self discovery is funny and one to which we can all relate.

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