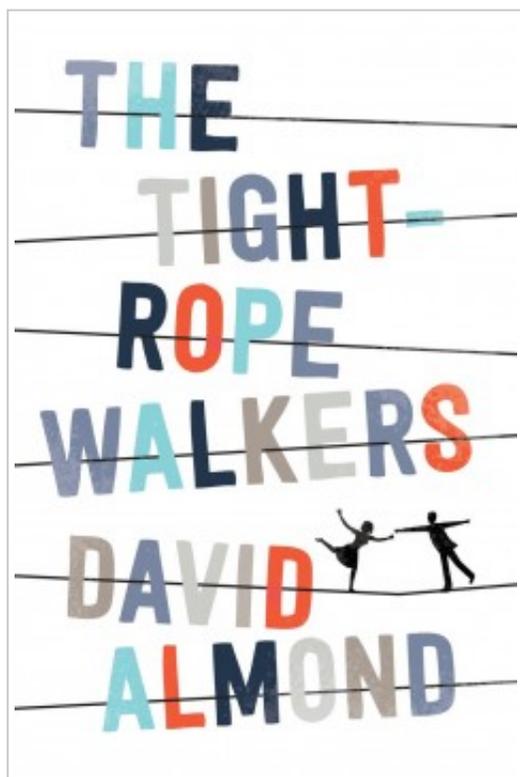


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The Tightrope Walkers

by David Almond

Price: \$17.99(Hardcover)

Published: March 24, 2015

Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes cast)

From the Publisher: International award winner David Almond draws on memories of his early years in Tyneside, England, for a moving coming-of-age novel, masterfully told.

A gentle visionary coming of age in the shadow of the shipyards of northern England, Dominic Hall is torn between extremes. On the one hand, he craves the freedom he feels when he steals away with the eccentric girl artist next door, Holly Stroud—his first and abiding love—to balance above the earth on a makeshift tightrope. With Holly, Dom dreams of a life different in every way from his shipbuilder dad's, a life fashioned of words and images and story. On the other hand, he finds himself irresistibly drawn to the brutal charms of Vincent McAlinden, a complex bully who awakens something wild and reckless and killing in Dom. In a raw and beautifully crafted bildungsroman, David Almond reveals...

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What We Say

Let's call "The Tightrope Walkers" a coming-of-age story but that's what you call a book about young people when it's really good. Go to a bookstore and you might find it comfortably nestled in the Young Adult section, where it belongs. But it also belongs any new work of fiction for writer David Almond has delivered a masterful tale inspired by his childhood in northern England in the sort of shipbuilding town Sting eulogized in his musical "The Last Ship." There's music in the dialogue of our hero Dominic, a clever lad soaking up words and experiences with youthful joy, whether it's the artistic girl Holly across the street, the dangerous and mercurial Vincent or the looming maw of the shipyard which threatens to swallow him up before this boy with a taste for poetry and language can let out the creativity bursting out of him. It's colorful, funny, immediate and scary. Though the usual things happen: first love, petty transgressions, cruel teachers and loving ones, death, danger and the like, I was genuinely uncertain how Dominic -- and especially the seemingly doomed Vincent -- might turn out. Poetry, rock n roll, free love, and the Sixties in general pop in, but it's all very much filtered through the almost isolated world Dominic lives in. It's like they try and recreate the ideas and happenings taking place somewhere far far away. From a mute tramp to a mad mother singing away in her upstairs bedroom to the tightrope walking that is a childhood fancy and yet somehow more, this is a colorful and vivid world. Very much in the tradition of other coming of age tales, it's also specific and unique enough to make the story of growing up seem fresh and remarkable all over again. One of the best books of the year, wherever you find it stocked on the shelves. -- Michael Giltz

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What Others Say

A tour de force. ... The novel is by turns reminiscent of classic bildungsromans such as the Billy Elliott film, Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird and Stephen King's IT, yet it retains a distinctive heart and voice of its own. ... An absolute must-have.

—School Library Journal (starred review)

The award-winning Almond poetically plumbs the depths of his 1950s and '60s childhood to explore themes of violence, war, God, creativity, beauty, death, art, the soul, our animal selves, whether we ever grow up or can really know each other...in short, life.

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

In a powerfully realistic bildungsroman from award-winning author Almond (The True Tale of the Monster Billy Dean), Dominic Hall, the son of a working man from Newcastle, seems destined for greater success than was possible for his ill-educated and often angry father.... Almond's characteristic penetrating writing and finely drawn characters are on full display in a story more fully grounded in a specific and important historical moment than anything he has published heretofore.

—Publishers Weekly (starred review)

Some books stand out for their characters, others for their...

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