



Halfway to the Sky

By Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

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Twelve-year-old Dani is running away from home, or what's left of home anyway. Her older brother, who had muscular dystrophy, died a few months ago. Then her father left and her parents got divorced. Now home is just Dani and her sad, silent mother, and Dani's got to get away. She plans to do something amazing, and go where her parents will never find her: she's going to hike the whole Appalachian Trail, from Georgia to Maine. The trail is a legend in her family, the place where her parents met, fell in love, and got married 14 years before.

Unfortunately for her master plan, her mother doesn't have much trouble figuring out where Dani's gone. Now it's the two of them, hiking for as long as Dani can manage to persuade her mother to keep going. But Dani's got an even longer emotional journey to make—and it's one she and her mom need to make together.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Halfway to the Sky By Kimberly Brubaker Bradley Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #294633 in Books
- Brand: Yearling
- Published on: 2003-07-08
- Released on: 2003-07-08
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.60" h x .43" w x 5.13" l, .25 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 176 pages

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grades 5-8--Grieving over the recent death of her 13-year-old brother from muscular dystrophy and the breakup of her parents' marriage that immediately followed, 12-year-old Dani runs away from home, intending to hike the Appalachian Trail, where her parents met 14 years earlier. Her mother tracks her down in the middle of her second night away, and Dani convinces her to accompany her first for a few nights, then for a week, and finally for just over two months. Along with discoveries about the natural world, Dani also finds the capacity to hike and to heal emotionally. She improves her relationship with her mother and is able to return home with a changed attitude that will allow her to mend fractured friendships. This is a fairly standard coming-of-age novel with the added benefit of Dani's mother also growing and healing during their time together on the trail. Although they must return home and resume their normal lives, they vow to continue their hike in sections until they complete their goal, which ends the novel on a positive note and hints at a continued closeness between mother and daughter. The book's setting provides a unique backdrop to their mutual journeys of discovery, and an afterword supplies an abbreviated history of the 2163-mile Appalachian Trail.

Ellen Fader, Multnomah County Library, Portland, OR

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 5-8. Twelve-year-old Dani has a plan when she runs away: she's determined to spend six months hiking the Appalachian Trail, from the trailhead at Springer Mountain, Georgia, to its end atop Mount Katahdin in Maine. On the 2,163-mile journey, she hopes to escape the grief of her brother's death and the wreckage of her parents' divorce. She is also retracing her family's beginnings: her parents met and married on the trail, and Dani, short for Katahdin, and her brother were named for famous trails' termini. Dani is furious when her mother finds her, but when Mother joins the hike and agrees to extend the trip, the journey becomes the means for Dani and her parents to begin the healing process and come to terms with their anger, grief, and fears. The story is remarkably affecting. As it unfolds, Bradley allows her gutsy heroine to manage extreme physical and emotional stresses in a way that's both believable and reassuring. *Chris Sherman*

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Review

"Teenagers will readily relate to the angst and anger and be intrigued by the details about the Trail itself."—*Kirkus Reviews*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Dean Green:

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