

# HOLIDAY HOUSE



## *What Girls Are Made Of*

by Elana K. Arnold

Holiday House, 2020

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Hardcover Originally Published by

Lerner Publishing Group, 2017

\*Age Range: 14 and up

Grade Range: Grade 9 & Up

### BOOK SYNOPSIS

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**Sixteen-year-old Nina isn't made of sugar and spice and everything nice. She is flesh and blood and desire, but she longs to know real love. Unconditional love. The kind her mother told her doesn't exist.**

Reeling from a shameful breakup with a boy she unabashedly worshipped, Nina drifts between school and her days volunteering at a dog shelter. But she's looking for something more. A way to fix her mistakes. Unsure of how to move on, Nina peels back the moments that have shaped her and given her a view of girlhood distorted by violence and sacrifice. One that led her to do something unspeakable to a fellow student.

As Nina grapples with regret, strange memories of a trip to Italy with her mother start to surface. Layer by layer, Elana K. Arnold reveals their painful effect, and questions what love really means.

Raw, emotional writing and a frank portrayal of the world teen girls live in set this award-winning book apart as a stunning chronicle of self-acceptance.

### REVIEWS AND PRAISE

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★ "Arnold interweaves myriad landscapes, from the parched affluence of California neighborhoods to the ordered sadness of a high-kill animal shelter where Nina volunteers, from the sculpted terrain of Rome's brutalized virgin martyrs to the imperfect physicality of Nina's own body, into a narrative wholeness that is greater than its parts. Unflinchingly candid, unapologetically girl, and devastatingly vital."—[Kirkus Reviews](#), Starred Review

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"Smart, true, and devastating, this is brutally, necessarily forthcoming about the crags of teen courtship."—[Booklist](#)

"In an afterword, Arnold explains that this story is the result of her anger at and complicity in the rules that society applies to girls. Her overarching theme is the fallacy of believing in unconditional love. The author presents a hopeful conclusion as Nina learns that self-love and fulfillment can be found through helping others."—[School Library Journal](#)

"There is probably not another YA book that describes all things 'girl' in the brutally honest way Arnold does here. Teen girls should read this book, even if it is not easy."—**VOYA**

"Nina is powerful, messy, and broken, and her voice oscillates between an aloof coolness and anxious neediness . . . The separate facets of the same Nina—sexual, emotional, thoughtful, lonely—finally begin to integrate into a whole in the hesitantly hopeful ending.—**The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books**

"Beautifully written and evocative, *What Girls Are Made Of* fearlessly examines the courage and struggle of being a teenage girl in the modern world. With a deft hand, Elana K. Arnold opens up a conversation about how girls survive as a whole when they are too often acknowledged only for their parts."—Christa Desir, author of *Other Broken Things*

"Stunning in its honesty and depth, *What Girls Are Made Of* unapologetically examines the strength, determination, and vulnerability of girls. . . . a masterpiece that is sure to live long in the memory of readers."—Brandy Colbert, author of the Cybils Award-winner *Pointe*

"Finally, finally, a book that is fully girl, with all of the gore and grace of growing up female exposed. . . . If you're looking to enter the mind of a girl navigating sex, love, and her own physicality, look no further than *What Girls Are Made Of*." —Carrie Mesrobian, author of the William C. Morris finalist *Sex & Violence*

"*What Girls Are Made Of* shows the true, beautiful, and confounding complexity of women. This one will rip your heart out."— Martha Brockenbrough, author of *The Game Of Love and Death*

## AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

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- A National Book Award Finalist

## MEDIA AND RESOURCES

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- [Reader's Guide](#)
- [Foreword Reviews Author Interview](#)

## \*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES

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A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

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