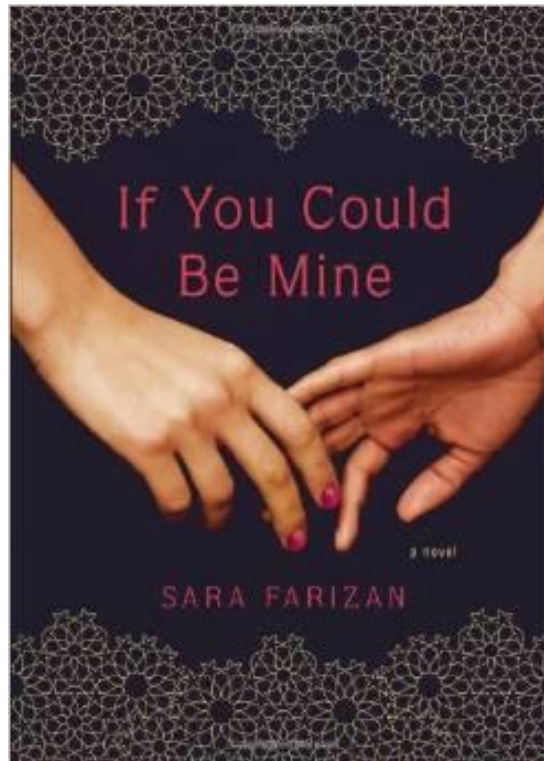


Children and Young Adult Book Review
High School
If You Could be Mine

Educator Reviewer: Devon Cristofaro
Student Reviewer: Tierra Hayes



Farizan, S. (2013). *If you could be mine*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Young Readers.

Educator Review:

Growing up in Iran, a country with strict religious beliefs and emphasis on the maintenance of traditional gender roles, best friends Sahar and Nasrin have been hiding their passionate love behind the façade of friendship since they were children. They balance each other out; Sahar is smart, soft spoken, submissive, and always looking out for others. Nasrin is a bold fashionista, who tends to be a tad self-absorbed but passionate about life. However, Sahar's life is turned upside down when Nasrin gets engaged to a 30-something handsome doctor, and the wedding plans begin immediately due to the excitement of her kind-hearted mother. Sahar frantically searches for a solution to what seems to be their dying romance when she stumbles across the world of transexuality and its legality in the eyes of the Iranian government and the Islamic faith. The wheels begin to turn. Can Sahar make the sacrifice of the body she has grown up in in hopes of saving her relationship and creating a "normal happy" life for her and Nasrin? Or is Nasrin even interested in leaving her fiancé if Sahar makes this sacrifice for them?

I found this novel completely enrapturing, despite the fact that I am neither Iranian, nor questioning whether or not I should change my gender for the one I love. However, I still found bits of myself in Sahar's desperate urge to cling to her best friend and soul mate; I could still understand Nasrin's decision to continue into her marriage. Sometimes I think we as readers mistake a lack of commonalities for an inability to understand or relate. This opened a new door for explored before and never in quite *Mine* (2013) allows readers to or may not be like their own. Isn't Aren't we asking ourselves to readers? When you approach the you can begin really rich experience, challenges, and the idea of what a "typical" story

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me into a world I had never quite this way. I think that *If You Could be* understand a perspective that may that what reading is all about? explore the minds of all kinds of text in this way with your students, conversations about diversity, choices, and start to push back on should sound, look, and feel like.

The only concern I would have about reading this novel in a classroom is the mature subject matter. Sometimes students are not quite ready to discuss identities that may differ from theirs or those around them. Sometimes the novel is a bit graphic when talking about the procedure behind gender transitions, but is never presented without purpose or taste. I believe that it would be important for all educators considering teaching this text to have a conversation about these topics and let their students know up front that they will be discussed within the novel, but I do not think that it should deter anyone from sharing this story with their students. Let a multitude of stories be told in our classrooms and show our students that valuable stories can be written from any perspective.

Devon Cristofaro
The University of Georgia, Athens, GA

Student Review:

Sara Farizan's *If You Could be Mine* looks into the love story of Sahar and Nasin that is more complicated than one might imagine. The gay couple must deal with their considered taboo actions in Afghanistan, the constant fear of getting caught, and then the impending marriage of Nasin to an older man. In the end, both girls must make a decision that they feel is right for themselves. This universal theme will resonate with all readers.

This book would especially appeal to any advocates of the LGBTQ community. It places the homosexual teenagers in harsh circumstances that may apply to teens anywhere. Readers who are willing and interested in diving into the world of two teenage girls in love would enjoy this book. They will learn about the choices young adults are forced to make to survive in the strict social regime of Afghanistan.

Tierra Hayes
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11th Grade