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JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE & LITERACY EDUCATION

## Review of *Five Feet Apart*

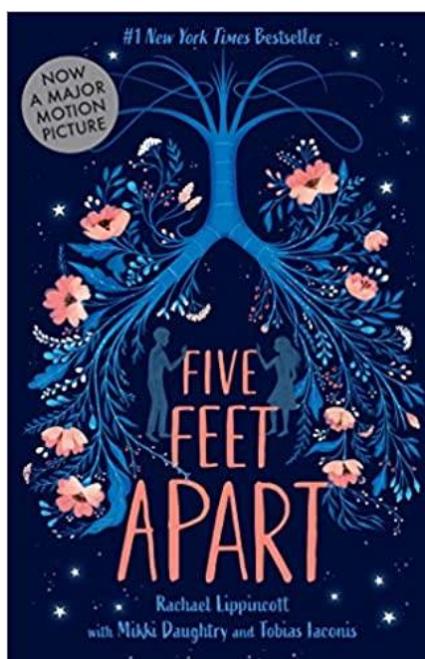
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**Adult/Educator Reviewer:** Amanda Wall

Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA

**Student Reviewer:** Dorothy Mortimore, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Student

Southeast Bulloch Middle School, Brooklet, GA



Lippincott, R., Iaconis, T., & Daughtry, M. (2018). *Five feet apart*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

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### Adult Review: Amanda Wall

In recent months, we have all become familiar with the phrase “six feet apart” as it relates to guidelines for social distancing in a time of COVID-19. This novel, however, tells the story of young people for whom “six feet apart” is an ongoing reality. Stella and Will are teenagers who meet at a hospital where they are both patients with cystic fibrosis (CF). Stella approaches her health with strict routines; she is even developing an app to help people with chronic conditions manage different aspects of their care. Will is frustrated with medications and treatments; although his mom has enrolled him in a clinical trial for a promising (and fictional) medication, Will does not respond to the trial in an enthusiastic manner. Stella and Will first develop a kind of antagonistic dynamic, then a friendship, and then a romance. Each inspires the other to take a different perspective on their experiences with CF. This is where the reader learns why the title of the book is *Five Feet Apart*.

The title of the book, here in 2020, caught our attention, so we looked into it. Dorothy enjoys realistic fiction, so this story appealed to her. As we read the book, we decided to review it because it offered a story of characters whose lives and interests could foster discussions among readers not only about CF, but also about family, friendships, and coming-of-age. Stella’s parents, Will’s mom, and two nurses who are like family also feature in the book. Additionally, readers can explore themes of friendship through Camila and Mya, Stella’s friends from school, and Poe, Stella’s long-time friend with CF. The book is written with multiple narrators with alternating chapters told from the perspectives of Stella and Will. *Five Feet Apart* offers young readers ways to connect to the characters and to learn more about the experiences of characters whose lives are like and unlike their own in different ways.

There are a few considerations for educators with this

book. As a teacher educator, I look for young adolescent fiction that can provide mirrors, windows, and sliding doors, in the phrase of Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop. This story of young people living with CF can broaden our perspectives and provide representation for other readers. *Five Feet Apart* offers readers these different perspectives and, since it is written with multiple narrators, a level of text complexity. There is some explicit language that teachers would need to consider. There is also a film version, so readers could compare the two as another way to discuss the story.

### Student Review: Dorothy Mortimore, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade student, Southeast Bulloch Middle School, Brooklet, GA

This book is about teenagers with cystic fibrosis (CF). Stella and Poe have known each other since they were six, while Will is a new patient because of a medicine trial. They all have to stay six feet apart from each other so they don’t potentially infect each other with harmful bacteria or make the other’s conditions worse.

I think that people who like realistic fiction books would find this interesting. The characters don’t get to enjoy regular activities that other kids their age would participate in, like going to school or going on trips with friends. Something I also like about this book is that it is written in two different perspectives: Stella’s and Will’s. You get a more personal look at what’s going on with each character beyond just their hospital life.