Review of Somebody Give This Heart a Pen Written by Sophia Thakur

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Adult Review: Julianna E. L. Kershen

Divided into five sections by poet-author Sophia Thakur, *Somebody Give This Heart a Pen*, traverses the arc of an artist celebrating her voice and ideas. Thakur opens with two poems inviting the reader to join her on this journey of growth she names as “the building, the breaking, the learning and recreating” (Untitled, p. 5). A sought after public speaker and spoken word artist, Thakur's words ring through the pages with honest depictions of a young life's hurts and challenges, of intimate relationships, and a journey to feel strength and comfort in one's own body. True to the title, as I read each poem I felt the author's heart writing life a love letter.

Using the metaphor of growth, Thakur returns to images of birth, development, struggle, and flourishing. Her poems convey resilience and optimism, reminding the reader that we can “always reseed. Always restart” (Untitled, p. 3). The poems, as miniature stories, move between relationships with friends, family, and lovers, as well as touching on politics, gender, bias, conformity, and beauty. Thakur speaks directly to the reader, and I found many moments when her word choice illustrated a purity of human emotion, such as when she states, “wishing that I could fold all of my secrets into your palm” (*Postcard People*, p. 36), and when she asks, “Should I be refusing my skin?” (*Journey of Mirrors*, p. 95).

Educators wishing to use *Somebody Give This Heart a Pen* in the classroom need to know that the poems present a young woman's perspectives on writing as a vehicle for an emotion filled life. Thakur's poems will likely resonate with many teenage readers, who will find her topics and conflicts close to their experiences. Some poems contain intimations of sexual acts and drinking. A number of the poems invite readers to write alongside Thakur, coaxing them to take up a pen and let their hearts join in her chorus (*When to Write; Rise to You*). Teachers could especially use these poems as read alouds and inspiration.

Student Review: Lucy Kershen, Grade 9

Sophia Thakur's *Somebody Give This Heart a Pen* is an emotional narrative in verse reflecting on the challenges, mysteries, and wonders of life. The book is divided into four sections: Grow, Wait, Break, and Grow again, and each one delves into the raw emotions, everyday interactions that have large consequences, and different ways that people grow and change over time that make up the human experience.

I think that *Somebody Give This Heart a Pen* would be a great book for people who don't generally “like” poetry because the writing itself is fairly simple, but contains many complex metaphors and concepts, such as “Death, pregnant on her tongue” that would be interesting to contemplate. That is also one of the reasons why I think that *Somebody Give This Heart a Pen* would be a good option for a high school English classroom book: it provides many concepts that would be engaging for students to think about and discuss, and classes could practice writing poems in her style or based on the concepts of *Somebody Give This Heart a Pen*.

Although I think that *Somebody Give This Heart a Pen* is a good option for existing poetry lovers, as well as people who have not yet read any poetry they really enjoy, I do think that the book would be best applicable to 14+ year olds, or people in high school and up, because it contains some themes that younger children may not understand, relate to, or have the language to discuss yet. However, I would definitely recommend *Somebody Give This Heart a Pen* for high school English classes, literature circles, and book clubs, because I think its concepts, writing style, and ideas are easy and accessible to read and interesting and relatable to discuss.

Overall, *Somebody Give This Heart a Pen* is a powerful reflection on all of the joys, terrors, surprises, and wonders of life and the human experience. I would recommend it to anyone looking for an accessible yet thought-provoking book of beautifully-written poems that will give them a new perspective on another person’s life – and may help them learn some things about their own.