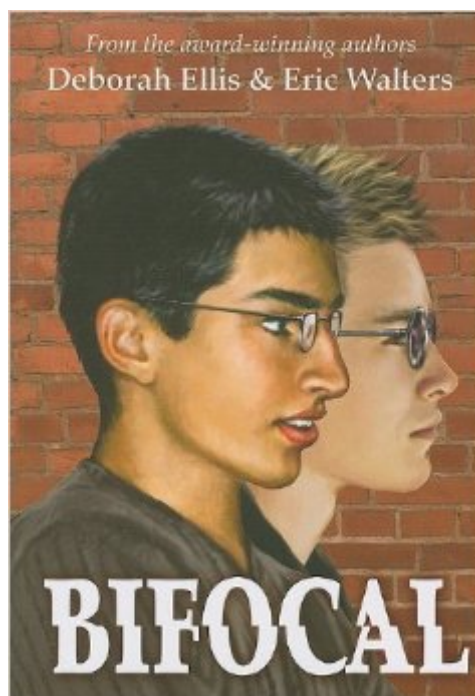


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# Bifocal



## Synopsis

On the White Ravens' Outstanding New International Books for Children and Young Adults list, 2008ForeWord Magazine's Book of the Year Awards Bronze Medal Winner (YA Fiction category), 2007Snow Willow Award nominee, 2008CCBC's Best Books for Kids & Teens, 2008Two bestselling authors join forces to write a powerful novel about racism. A student arrested on suspicions of terrorism. A high school torn apart by racism. Two boys from two different sets of circumstances forced to choose sides. These are the issues at the heart of *Bifocal*, a groundbreaking new novel for young-adults. The story is told from two different points of view. Haroon is a serious student devoted to his family. His grandparents emigrated from Afghanistan. Jay is a football star devoted to his team. He is white. One day their high school is put on lockdown, and the police arrest a Muslim student on suspicion of terrorist affiliations. He might be guilty. Or is he singled out because of his race? The entire student body fragments along racial lines and both Haroon and Jay find that their differences initially put them at odds. The Muslim students become targets and a smoke-bomb is set off near their lockers while Jay and his teammates believe they've been set-up to look like racists. *Bifocal* is, by no stretch, an easy book. Award-winning authors Deborah Ellis and Eric Walters deliver a serious, hard-hitting book about racism that does not talk down to young people.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (38 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #664,627 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #54 in Â Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Performing Arts > Dance #305 in Â Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Prejudice & Racism

## Customer Reviews

Lets get one thing out of the way. this is a novel aimed at the 9-15 year old crowd. Its centered in a high school in Canada and concerns racial tensions. Now that we've gotten that out of the way, the book is actually pretty good. Its a nice presentation of a topic that has gotten lots and lots of media

coverage lately. the battle between radical Islam extremists and the rest of the world is played out here on a much smaller scale. In a high school, just like the larger outside world, you have your groups. The "brown" kids (Arabic, Indian, Afghani, etc..) the Black kids, the Goths, the Emos, the Popular Preppies, and then the Jocks. All of them meet in the cafeteria for lunch but they are still divided according to social status and for the most part, skin color. The characters are pretty well written. Jay is the jock with a conscience. A Christian who is not sure he can do what the others do. Haroon, the Afghani who is smart and quiet, reserved and just wants to live a quiet life of peace. Kevin, the quarterback who never backs down. Zana, Haroon's twin who is stubborn and convinced of her own convictions. And we have Julian, the kid who seems able to cross all the social boundaries and ties them all together nicely. An incident happens at the school and it sparks feelings of hate and violence. Intolerance and harsh ideas abound in this book, but it serves as a mini-primer on what we face today. There are some racial comments in this book, but they all serve the purpose of advancing the story and showing how intolerance and ignorance make us sound uneducated. All things aside, I can't give this book 5 stars, for a few reasons. One, the ending felt really really rushed. There was great build up, tensions were piling and then....it fizzled. We never did get to find out what happened to the suspect arrested and taken to jail. It would have been nice to see the fate of that young person and how things were wrapped up or explained. We also didn't get to see any of the fallout or tensions between two of the main characters play out. At only 270-ish pages, there was ample room to explain a little more of the story and show some of the ramifications as well. But it was a good book none the less. I would recommend this book to a teacher looking for something to engage his or her students. It would go well in a sixth grade classroom or even a junior high civics class or world history. It's a good book to get children and young adults thinking and looking at two different sides to the same story/event. Solid writing with very few mistakes, a good subject matter and it takes place in October and around Halloween, how fitting that I finished it this morning...Halloween. A good book that bears a reading.

In today's world, we never know when our lives are going to change at the drop of a hat. However, most of us don't expect for our very existences to be questioned, and especially not those of us who live fairly normal lives in typical small towns. But when an Islamic terrorist plot is uncovered in just such a place, two high school boys find their lives turned upside down and their values questioned, and they both must make life-altering choices as to how they are going to handle themselves. Haroon is a Muslim who is studying for a chance to be on the school's Reach for the Top academic team, but his life undergoes a terrifying shift when he is mistakenly taken out of his

classroom as part of the terrorist plot that is uncovered. Even though his identity is secured fairly quickly, Haroon finds that life's going to be different; others look at him differently based on his religion and the color of his skin, things he'd never before thought much about. Haroon tries to keep things as normal as possible, but it's difficult when his twin sister Zana decides that her way of dealing with Muslim prejudice is to don the veiled abaya that makes her even more identifiable. Jay is a star football player in his first year at the local high school; he's a good student who is pleased to find himself accepted as part of the in crowd. His whole life is focused on football until the team captain begins to let his prejudices against those different from him show; Jay finds himself swept up into an incident that quickly grows out of control. What Jay decides to do to rectify the situation reveals his own character. Told in chapters that alternate between Jay's and Haroon's first-person points of view, this is an exceptional novel that speaks directly to today's headlines. Haroon and his family face prejudice simply because of their religion, and Jay and his family have to decide if their church beliefs allow them to display their own prejudices. The fact that the boys' lives don't really intersect gives the book a realistic feel, and the author does not shy away from the hard words or facts that most people are unwilling to face. Rarely has a book made me think so much or wonder so deeply about what makes us human. The book doesn't stray into the "happy ever after" domain and it's a very believable situation that many of us may face (or perhaps already do). I would be gratified to see this book as required curriculum in high schools across our country. Well-written and well told, it's a must-read. Highly, highly recommended. Read this book.

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