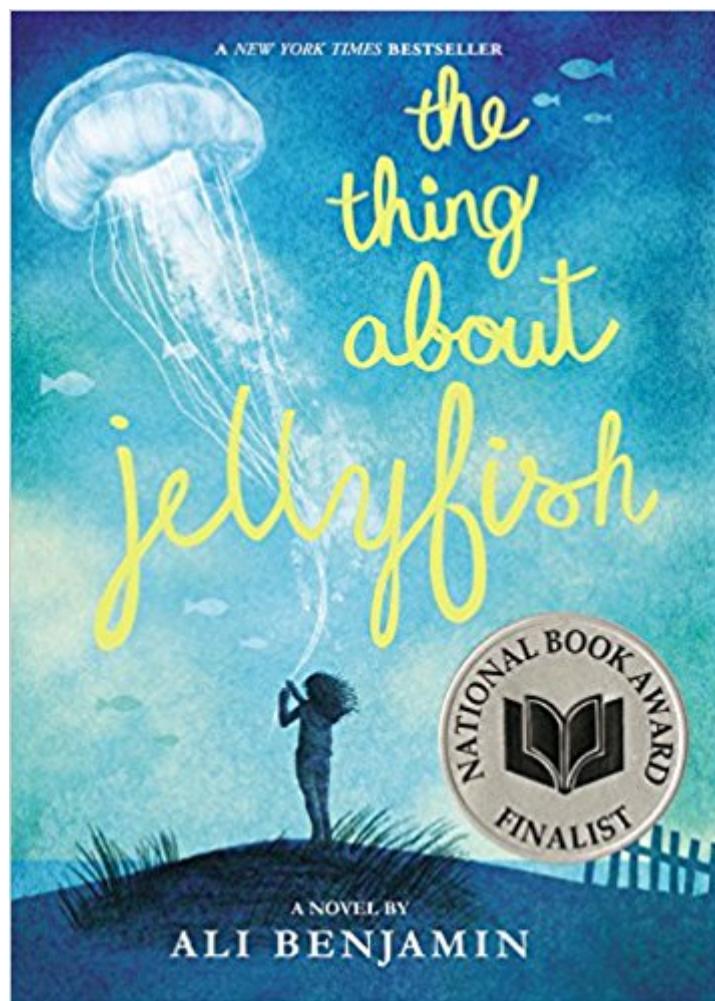


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The Thing About Jellyfish



Synopsis

This stunning debut novel about grief and wonder was an instant New York Times bestseller and captured widespread critical acclaim, including selection as a 2015 National Book Award finalist! After her best friend dies in a drowning accident, Suzy is convinced that the true cause of the tragedy must have been a rare jellyfish sting--things don't just happen for no reason. Retreating into a silent world of imagination, she crafts a plan to prove her theory--even if it means traveling the globe, alone. Suzy's achingly heartfelt journey explores life, death, the astonishing wonder of the universe...and the potential for love and hope right next door. Oddlot Entertainment has acquired the screen rights to *The Thing About Jellyfish*, with Gigi Pritzker set to produce with Bruna Papandrea and Reese Witherspoon.

Customer Reviews

Gr 4-7 •Suzy's best friend, Franny Jackson, was a strong swimmer. There is no way she could have drowned, at least in Suzy's mind. Suzy's determined search for a different explanation for her friend's death leads her to believe that Franny was stung by an Irukandji jellyfish. Having nothing but time, since she has no other friends and has decided to stop talking, Suzy sets out to prove her theory. This multilayered novel takes readers on several concurrent emotional journeys. Benjamin skillfully blends time and narrative to slowly reveal truths about Suzy: first and foremost that their friendship was over long before Franny's death. The girl she had once thought was her best friend decided it was time for a middle school social upgrade, choosing popularity over her awkward childhood pal. Suzy's decision to seek revenge and remind Franny of their bond backfires, destroying what was left of their relationship. Consequently, Franny's death is the impetus for the protagonist's mission of personal reconciliation for the guilt and regret she feels over their falling out. Suzy's fierce intelligence, compounded by her painful transition into adolescence, makes her a sympathetic and compelling character. Benjamin's sense of timing and delivery is extraordinary, as she blends the visceral experiences of Suzy's journey with an internal dialogue that is authentic and poignant. Though Suzy herself is oddly unique in her self-imposed social ineptitude and singular focus, the politics of friendships and changing values of young teens will resonate with readers. Benjamin's inverse approach to tragedy, placing the death at the beginning of the novel and storytelling through the grieving process, transcends the trope, as the story triumphs in the affecting realities of emotional response and resilience. VERDICT Strong readers of middle grade realistic fiction will fully immerse themselves in this superbly written, heartfelt novel. •Juliet Morefield, Multnomah County Library, OR

**"A painful story smartly told, Benjamin's first solo novel has appeal well beyond a middle school audience." Kirkus Reviews, starred review "Reminiscent of works by Jennifer L. Holm and Sharon Creech, Benjamin's novel is a shining example of the highs and lows of early adolescence." Publishers Weekly, starred review

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