

READING RIGHT! Family Time Magazine. Monthly Book Reviews, by Karyn Bowman

Sister Sluggers

Sister Sluggers by Emily Chetkowski is not your usual pre-teen book. These are not cutesy girls who fall into mysteries or boy trouble. They are not shrinking violets or perfect angels. Like some sisters, Emily and Marianne like each other but can find the right nerve to hit that is guaranteed to irritate.

Emily and Marianne are two lively girls who play tricks on each other, get irritated with each other and play soft ball. Together they make an outstanding pitching and catching combination. Softball is a tradition with the family. Their older sisters were players until they hit the teen years and discovered boys. Dad continues to play, much to the chagrin of some acquaintances.

For this particular summer, as Emily continues as catcher on her team, Marianne is in the outfield for the Comets, the worst team in the league, because she came much too late to sign-up night. Unexpectedly, as the season rolls on, it seems that the worst team in the league has become one of the best teams. And the sisters find themselves battling in the playoffs, with their parents trying to be supportive of both girls.

But that is not all that happens. Marianne will have to find her gumption and Emily will gain greater understanding of her sister's strength.

As I read along this memoir, I was moved by the confessions that Emily has to make about herself in regards to how mean she was to her little sister. Marianne learns to become more independent of Emily while matching her at times for irritability.

There is also a great sense of family togetherness, parents who are sensible and tough, who want what is best for their girls on the budget they can afford.

This is a memoir that preteens can read and identify with even though the time period is from the mid-1970's. The story of sibling rivalry and families supporting their children is universal. Emily and Marianne are likable, even when they are being stinkers.

Author Emily Chetkowski holds little back about her twelfth summer. The emotions of the game are real as well as her confessions of understanding about her sister.