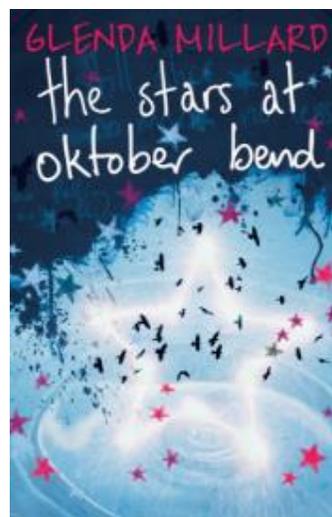


2017 Carnegie Medal shortlist Talking Points

Title: **The Stars at Oktober Bend**

Author: **Glenda Millard**

Publisher: **Old Barn Books**



ALICE

Alice's traumatic back-story isn't all clearly explained to the reader at first – do you think this withholding of information is an effective choice by the author?

Despite her trauma, what are the things that inspire Alice in her writing?

Do you think she's weak or strong, fearful or brave? Why?

Alice's "soul is filled with songbirds" – what do you think this means?

ALICE'S VOICE

What did you make of Alice's poetry? Why do you think the author has chosen to write in her voice in this way?

Why does Alice herself choose to express herself like this? What's the connection between her speech and her writing?

Alice's vocabulary isn't always quite conventional – can you identify some examples of language that's particularly distinctive to her voice?

ALICE (AS OTHERS SEE HER)

How is Alice seen by

- her grandmother?
- her brother?
- Manny, when he first meets her?
- the people in the town?

And whose views of Alice change over the course of the book?

How important is Bear in Alice's life, and in the book?



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MANNY

What do we know about Manny's feelings about his past?

In Sierra Leone, apparently "stories are not written on paper" – what do you think this means?

How settled and happy is Manny in his new family?

Why does he run?

What's the significance of Manny's name? And Alice's?

FRIENDSHIP

What do Alice and Manny have in common?

What do they each gain from their relationship with the other, what do they learn from each other?

How does their friendship give them strength, and what does it teach them about how to deal with the world?

THE ENDING

What do you think of the flood – why might the author have chosen to include this episode in the story, and does it work for you?

The author has described herself as a "*mostly happy, hopeful and optimistic person*" – *is this the world-view you'd guess from the ending to the book?*

AND FINALLY...

Does this Carnegie-shortlisted book deserve to win? Why, or why not?



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