



Looking for Alibrandi

By Melina Marchetta

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Josephine Alibrandi is seventeen, and in her final year of school. Dealing with her mum and the ways of her Nonna are daunting enough as she prepares for her exams. But Josie is about to discover real life gets in the way of her carefully made plans. She suddenly has to deal with having her father around for the first time in her life, falling in love and uncovering her family's secret background. Despite all the turmoil, this is the year Josie discovers that emancipation doesn't mean escaping from your past.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Seventeen-year-old Josephine Alibrandi is no stranger to conflict. If she's not caught between her strict single mom and her even stricter grandmother, then she's trying to choose between wealthy good boy John Barton and working-class bad boy Joseph Coote. Josephine is always in trouble with the nuns at her Catholic school (who everyone calls "penguins because of them wearing wimples and all that *Sound of Music* gear") because she fights with native Australian kids over her mixed Australian/Italian heritage. Just when she thinks her situation couldn't possibly get more complicated, her mysterious, long-lost biological father comes back and Josephine must decide if it's worth getting to know this person who abandoned her and her mother. But through it all--including a startling revelation from her grandmother and the suicide of a close friend--Josephine manages to hold on to her sense of humor, as in this reflective moment: "I could have been a model for Hot Pants. Except that when I finally put my glasses on, reality set in. Hot Pants would have to wait."

Award-winning Australian author Melina Marchetta has created a strong and sassy role model in Josephine, whom girls with growing pains on both sides of the Pacific will love. With its accurate and insightful portrayal of a young woman's coming of age, *Looking for Alibrandi* will have female teens waiting eagerly for Marchetta's next novel. (Ages 12 and older) --*Jennifer Hubert*

From Publishers Weekly

Although this involving novel is set in the author's native Australia, American readers will feel right at home, thanks to the charismatic, outspoken narrator, 17-year-old Josephine Alibrandi. A scholarship student at a tony Catholic girls' school, Josie is aware that she is different from her affluent "Aussie" classmates: she's illegitimate, and she's closely tied to her Italian immigrant community. She feels periodically rebellious against her classmates' snobbishness, against the nuns' authority at school, against her community's mores. Even so, Josie clearly regards the women in her lifeAher single mother, her grandmother and even some of the nunsAwith affection as well as exasperation. Josie has less experience dealing with guys until senior year, when three members of the opposite sex complicate her world. Her father, who has not previously known of her existence, arrives on the scene unexpectedly, and she can't help feeling drawn to him. She also becomes involved with two boys her own age: the upper-class but desperately unhappy John Barton and the wilder, iconoclastic Jacob Coote. The casting or plot may sound clichéd, but the characterizations are unusually insightful and persuasive. In articulate, passionate prose, Marchetta weaves the intricate web of Josephine's relationships, juxtaposing her revelations about her family history against current crises (these include John's suicide). If the author loses momentum at the end, straining for tidy closure, she does, simultaneously, leave open new doorways for her heroine. Ages 14-up.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 9-12-Melina Marchetta's novel (Orchard, 1999) is an insightful portrait of an intense yet humorous young person. Though illegitimate, the 17-year-old Australian protagonist, Josephine Alibrandi, is a universally recognizable teen wrestling with many of the same worries that assail all high school students. Josie copes with the usual concerns about boys, friends, and where she fits in as a scholarship student at a Catholic school in a Sydney suburb. At the same time that she is trying to sort out complex relationships with her tradition-bound grandmother and her warm, no-nonsense mother, she is confronting her long-absent father. This is a deftly crafted story, and the characters have the ring of reality in their dialogue and actions. Marcella Russo's narration is equally fine, with each character distinctive. She conveys a special piquancy in

the accented speech of the immigrant grandmother. Chapter and cassette breaks are underscored with light, jazzy music. This audiobook is a solid selection for any young adult literature list, and a must buy for libraries where teens borrow audiobooks.

Barbara Wysocki, Cora J. Belden Library. Rocky Hill, CT

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Users Review

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