

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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ZebraFish.

Emerson, Sharon (Author) , Kurilla, Renee (Illustrator)

May 2010. 128 p. Atheneum, hardcover, \$16.99. (9781416995258). 741.5.

Several friends, led by the purple-haired Vita, try to figure out how to make their band work despite the fact that no one knows how to play anything. But when Vita, whose older brother is a cancer researcher, learns that band-member Tanya has leukemia, she begins to wonder how their upcoming performance might be put to a greater good. Emerson's graphic novel (developed with Peter Reynolds' FableVision media company) succeeds on several levels: the characters are credibly diverse in personality and appearance, and their individual stories are carefully twisted into a full and complex story arc.

Additionally, information about leukemia's physical toll on a young patient and research methods to combat it are integrated cleanly and without didacticism. Full-color panels vary in size and shape, with scenes moving from the stage to a soda shop to the back corridors of the hospital. Gentler and for a younger crowd than Judd Winick's *Pedro and Me* (2000), this bouncy cartoon story nonetheless mines equally serious territory, and stands a good chance of finding wide popularity to boot.

— *Francisca Goldsmith*