



## The Last Leaves Falling

*By Sarah Benwell*

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### **The Last Leaves Falling** By Sarah Benwell

A teen grapples with ALS and his decision to die in this devastatingly beautiful debut novel infused with the haunting grace of samurai death poetry and the noble importance of friendship.

Abe Sora is going to die, and he's only seventeen years old. Diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), he's already lost the use of his legs, which means he can no longer attend school. Seeking a sense of normality, Sora visits teen chat rooms online and finally finds what he's been longing for: friendship without pity.

As much as he loves his new friends, he can't ignore what's ahead. He's beginning to lose the function of his hands, and soon he'll become even more of a burden to his mother. Inspired by the death poems of the legendary Japanese warriors known as samurai, Sora makes the decision to leave life on his own terms. And he needs his friends to help him.

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### Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 8 Up—Abe Sora loves baseball, wants to be a professor, spends much of his time reading history and literature—and is dying of ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis). No longer able to attend school, as he is now wheelchair bound—and the school is not equipped to handle his physical needs—Abe spends his days either alone or with his mother and doctors. He joins a chatroom anonymously, never telling anyone of his illness. When his mother, worried about her son's isolation, insists that he invite his two online friends over for dinner, he agrees but does not inform them his health situation. Despite the initial shock, the three become good friends, giving Abe a chance to have normal teen experiences. As his condition grows worse, he thinks more and more about death. His counselor gives him a book on samurai death poetry, which helps him realize that he wants to die with dignity. Written by a British author and set in Japan, this unique title deals not just with the days leading up to death but with facing it on one's own terms. This is more a tale of friendship than of romance and one of living life to the fullest for as long as possible. Abe is a strong, introspective teen who reads, thinks deeply, and wants more out of life than pity. VERDICT Not just another "dying teen novel," this thought-provoking read offers teens a different perspective on living and loving life.—Janet Hilbun, University of North Texas

### Review

\*"Benwell's deeply moving story is visceral...and psychologically acute in its portrayal of a dying teen and his loyal friends. Its shattering ending is sure to engender discussion among readers." (*Booklist, starred review*)

"Benwell's gentle treatment of friendship and death with dignity will touch fans of John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars*." (*Kirkus*)

\*"This is more a tale of friendship than of romance and one of living life to the fullest for as long as possible...this thought-provoking read offers teens a different perspective on living and loving life." (*School Library Journal, starred review*)

\*"Benwell's story is remarkably unsentimental, and her setting—contemporary urban Japan—adds a unique appeal...[T]he haiku Sora reads, and writes, are a perfect symbol for his life: brief in length but full of strength and subtlety." (*Horn Book, starred review*)

\*"It's a memorable and haunting story of a boy's determination to seize control of the limited time he has left." (*Publishers Weekly, starred review*)

\*"An exquisite debut YA novel that serves as a guide to living a meaningful life, and the importance of family, friendship and self-knowledge." (*Shelf Awareness, starred review*)

### About the Author

Sarah Benwell lives in the picturesque English city of Bath, where she studied for an MA in Writing For Young People. Now she writes, runs creative writing workshops for teens and adults, such as the Young Writers Squad at Trowbridge Library where she's also a writer in residence, and works retail at unsociable hours. Having seen a good chunk of the world, Sarah is a keen advocate for diversity in life and on bookshelves, and she loves nothing more than acquainting herself with both. As such, she co-runs DiversifYA.com: an online space that highlights diverse experience and promotes inclusion in YA fiction.

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#### Reginald McDade:

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#### Dorothy Stanek:

Spent a free time and energy to be fun activity to do! A lot of people spent their leisure time with their family, or their particular friends. Usually they accomplishing activity like watching television, gonna beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing same every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your own personal free time/ holiday? May be reading a book might be option to fill your free of charge time/ holiday. The first thing that you'll ask may be what kinds of publication that you should read. If you want to consider look for book, may be the guide untitled The Last Leaves Falling can be excellent book to read. May be it could be best activity to you.

#### Denita Lumley:

Playing with family inside a park, coming to see the sea world or hanging out with close friends is thing that usually you will have done when you have spare time, subsequently why you don't try issue that really opposite from that. A single activity that make you not sense tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition of knowledge. Even you love The Last Leaves Falling, you can enjoy both. It is good combination right, you still wish to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh can occur its mind hangout people. What? Still don't obtain it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

#### Michelle Oquinn:

Are you kind of occupied person, only have 10 or 15 minute in your day time to upgrading your mind skill or thinking skill actually analytical thinking? Then you have problem with the book when compared with can satisfy your limited time to read it because all of this time you only find book that need more time to be learn. The Last Leaves Falling can be your answer since it can be read by you actually who have those short free time problems.

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