

## Book Information

### Title

Hear Me

### Creator

Kerry O'Malley Cerra

### Format

Print, ebook, and audiobook

### Version reviewed

Published paperback copy provided by the publisher

### Publication date

2022

### Length

318 pages or 6+ hours (audio version)

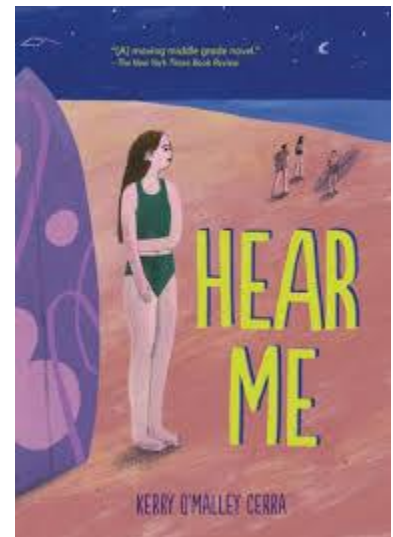
### Audience

Middle Grade (ages 8-12)

## Reviewer Information

MC Brickell

Independent reviewer



## Critical Review

Kerry O'Malley Cerra's second book *Hear Me* is a middle grade novel about Rayne, a twelve-year-old girl living in Florida, who must work through complicated feelings about her significant hearing loss. The story opens immediately on a hearing test which shows signs of her hearing worsening and her parents beginning a discussion about cochlear implants with her audiologist. Rayne is incredibly resistant to the idea of cochlear implants due to fear about the procedure as well as fear about how her life will change. As the story progresses, she researches alternative treatments, like stem cell studies, and seeks out information from both CI users and Deaf people. While the plot touches on other things - a student council election, Rayne's friendships, and a musician she enjoys - hearing loss and how it affects her is a key thread throughout. The plot is stretched somewhat thin when Rayne runs away via bus, first to meet a researcher and then to a Deaf school, but it bounces back. Ultimately, Rayne and her family realize that they have to work through accepting her hearing loss first before making any major decisions about it.

Overall, the details about hearing loss ring true, and O'Malley Cerra does note her own hearing loss later in life influenced her to write this book. In the latter half of the book, Rayne's best friend Jenika encourages her to read a biography of Helen Keller and Rayne resists, frustrated by always having Keller pushed on her. Throughout my time in school, I also had Helen Keller pushed on me and resisted as much as Rayne does! There were other little things that I've also experienced, like Rayne's hearing aids emitting feedback with direct pressure or loud noises and a realization that she would have to look up the lyrics to understand her favorite singer. One thing that readers may struggle with is a stylistic choice; O'Malley Cerra chooses to demonstrate the extent of Rayne's hearing loss by using asterisks in place of words that Rayne didn't hear. I felt that it was somewhat heavy-handed and purposefully omitted during an

emotional speech that came during the climax. This doesn't detract from the story's overall authenticity however.

There's a lack of stories about the Deaf and hard-of-hearing experience, especially for children who are experiencing hearing loss, and *Hear Me* is a great addition to the limited canon. Coming to terms with your hearing loss can be a somewhat heavy topic and sensitive readers should be aware of graphic details about cochlear implant surgery.

**In sum, this book is**

Recommended

**If you like this, you'll also like**

*El Deafo* by Cece Bell