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# Saving Red



## Synopsis

Sonya Sones, award-winning author of *What My Mother Doesn't Know*, delivers a gripping, funny, and inspiring novel in verse about what happens when the person you set out to save ends up saving you. Right before winter break, fourteen-year-old Molly Rosenberg reluctantly volunteers to participate in Santa Monica's annual homeless count, just to get her school's community service requirement out of the way. But when she ends up meeting Red, a spirited homeless girl only a few years older than she is, Molly makes it her mission to reunite her with her family in time for Christmas. This turns out to be extremely difficult because Red refuses to talk about her past. There are things Molly won't talk about either. Like the awful thing that happened last winter. She may never be ready to talk about that. Not to Red, or to Cristo, the soulful boy she meets while riding the Ferris wheel one afternoon. When Molly realizes that the friends who Red keeps mentioning are nothing more than voices inside Red's head, she becomes even more concerned about her well-being. How will Molly keep her safe until she can figure out a way to get Red home? In Sonya Sones's latest novel, two girls, with much more in common than they realize, give each other a new perspective on the meaning of family, friendship, and forgiveness.

## Book Information

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Teens > Romance > Contemporary

## Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up • A page-turning novel in verse about loss, grief, and redemption told in the voice of a wide-eyed, naive fourteen-year-old. Molly Rosenberg has been on her own for the past year, with

only her service dog Pixel to ease her loneliness and frequent panic attacks. Her formerly great mother spends her days smoking medical marijuana and watching the shopping channel, and her lawyer dad has become a workaholic. The cause of this family's psychic pain is slowly revealed through the Santa Monica teen's earnest narrative. Over winter break, Molly meets a vivacious but volatile homeless girl just a few years older than herself and becomes fixated on returning Red to her family. She is also swept up in a sweet and tender crush on Christo, a handsome potential ally, who gets whisked away by his parents to New York for the holidays. Molly exhausts her wits and her resources trying to keep Red safe, and as she gains her trust, she learns the girl's story. At the same time, Molly shares her own feelings of guilt and grief over her older brother's disappearance the previous year. In the end, the mentally ill Red gets the help she needs (clearly a long, hard path lies ahead), and all of Molly's angst and trauma are neatly resolved. This work is Frank Capra-esque in its belief in the power of love to win out against all odds and even includes a homage to *It's a Wonderful Life*. While addressing some serious and thorny issues, this book maintains an upbeat and hopeful tone throughout, which may indeed be its saving grace. VERDICT A quick, accessible read for fans of emotional, character-driven titles that are not too gritty or despairing. —Luann Toth, School Library Journal

“A new book from Sonya Sones is always an event, and *Saving Red* shows why. This tender, taut novel in verse is both wise and full of heart.” (Deb Caletti, National Book Award finalist and author of *Essential Maps for the Lost*) “I couldn’t put *Saving Red* down.” (Jay Asher, author of #1 New York Times bestseller *Thirteen Reasons Why*) “Original. Heart-wrenching. A beautiful treatise on empathy and love. These characters belong to you-as your own friends-when you read their story. *Saving Red* is an absolute treasure.” (John Corey Whaley, Printz Award winner and National Book Award finalist) “Each carefully crafted poem comes together to paint a vivid picture of love, loss, and the hope and humor that’s caught in between. *Saving Red* soars and will speak to the hearts of teen readers everywhere.” (Dr. Rose Brock, Sam Houston State University) “I love the way Sones’s verse carries the reader through the journey as though we’re riding a wave. We never know where it will crash down, or where it will lift us up gently—until it does.” (Jacqueline Woodson, National Book Award winner) “A page-turning novel in verse about loss, grief, and redemption told in the voice of a wide-eyed, naive fourteen-year-old. A quick, accessible read for fans of emotional, character-driven titles.” (School Library

Journal)“Sones tackles the topic of homelessness, runaways, and mental illness in another hard-hitting, but never overly dark, novel in verse. A beautiful window into the desperate futility of trying to save someone who doesn’t necessarily want to be saved.” (Booklist (starred review)) “[A] moving verse novel from Sones. Sones’s staccato, first-person poems sensitively trace the innocence Molly sheds as her world expands.” (Publishers Weekly)

‘Saving Red’ by Sonya Sones is an unabashedly riveting tale of Molly, a girl who has fielded her fair share of trouble, yet doesn’t back down in the face of what could be considered nothing less than overwhelming. Molly’s relationship with her parents is strained, to say the least, and she makes mention of her brother, Noah, who has disappeared from her life. At times readers may wonder if he disappeared in the literal or figurative sense, but it is made clear soon enough, compounding the issues that Molly is dealing with when she comes upon a homeless girl named Red. Red is homeless, yes, but she is unwilling to accept charity, citing her oft-used phrase, “I better not,” to turn down any offer presented to her. Molly tries unflinchingly to provide Red with necessities, sometimes with help from Cristo, a cute boy Molly meets on a Ferris wheel. Whereas in some books the fast-paced nature of a 6-hour long in-person relationship would seem rushed and maybe even forced, Sones is at her best yet again, making readers see that Molly and Cristo share a connection at the tender age of fourteen that makes them eager and willing to get to know each other through texts, Facetime, and phone calls when Cristo leaves on vacation mere hours after happening upon Molly originally. Their relationship and ensuing troubles when Cristo seemingly disappears brings out the teen angst that any fourteen-year-old would have if in a similar situation. Yet Molly doesn’t have time to worry about Cristo as much as she’d like to wallow when he doesn’t respond to her texts. She has to deal with Red and the voices that inhabit Red’s mind. By trying to help Red, Molly finds that her understanding of what happened when her brother Noah went missing comes to a head, and she has to focus on the ensuing internal battle that she feels, and which Red tries to help her come to grips with. Despite Red’s craziness, which Red fully understands she herself is dealing with, Molly can see the truth and wisdom in Red’s words, as she tries to help Molly cope with the losses she has sustained. In ‘Saving Red,’ relationships are tested on all levels, including family, friends, and romances. Sones has a way of captivating readers’ attention and making them see the readers as nothing less than real people with real problems, who deal with them as only as those people could. They are all unique, independent, strikingly unsure characters who find their truth in their own ways as the story goes on. It is a testament to Sones’ writing style that she can capture all

of this in short, to-the-point verse. The last few words of the novel leave room for a whole new story that Sones will hopefully write one day. Those last words should provide hope, making anyone's heart leap - especially those invested in the outcome of Molly's story. Beth Rodgers, Author of 'Freshman Fourteen,' A Young Adult Novel

Sonya Sones made me cry today. Her new book, *Saving Red*, is a beautiful glimpse into the life of a struggling young girl whose encounter with a homeless girl changes much about her perspectives. Molly has a secret. It's not one she wants to tell anyone, but it is the reason she has an emotional support dog, Pixel, and also why Pixel is her only friend. Her mother is continually stoned, and her father is a workaholic. As part of a community service requirement, Molly helps with her city's homeless count one fateful evening, and that's where she first encounters Red, a woman not too much older than she is who sparks a need in Molly to take care of her. In fact, since she can't save her own family, Molly makes it her mission to reunite Red with her family in time for Christmas. While on this mission, Molly also meets a young man named Cristo. They are randomly seated together on the Ferris wheel and they are immediately attracted to each other. Molly has one date with Cristo before he goes away with his family to New York for a vacation. Cristo is on board with "Operation Red" and tries to help Molly from afar. There is so much to love about *Saving Red*. Sonya Sones has a gift with books in verse, and this one is no exception. The carefully crafted poems that weave this story lead the reader from one plot point to another. I could not put the book down. The characters are so deeply constructed that they feel like people in life, not just on the page. And when I reached the end (no spoilers, I promise!), which was INCREDIBLY satisfying, the tears sprang from my eyes. Sonya Sones is far and away my favorite verse novelist, and *Saving Red* does not disappoint. I highly recommend this book.

Sonya Sones has done it again with a beautifully composed novel-in-verse that weaves serious topics such as homelessness, runaways, PTSD, mental disorders, anxiety, and dysfunctional families together with friendships and first love. Sones takes her readers on an emotional Ferris wheel with this gripping new book that will have you grinning, crying, and longing to know someone as wonderful as Molly, the protagonist, whose public service assignment leads her to make it a personal mission to help save a stranger--a mission that helps Molly discover truths about herself and her family. In a tale of love, loss, and learning to trust others, Sones has a cast of characters

you won't soon forget with an I-Can't-Put-Down-This-Book story that will leave you breathless as your heart sings and sobs just as the story ends.

This book was so wonderful. I was engaged from the first page on. It's a quick read, but it's so rich and so beautifully written. The story was unique and fresh and I really felt for the protagonist and for Red. The author does not make light of Red's challenges/issues-she come across very authentically as does the interesting relationship that forms between her and the protagonist Molly. And I LOVED the romance. It felt so true to an almost 15-year-old and added a nice element to the story. A bonus: the mention in the book of my favorite book, I'll Give You the Sun. Two thumbs up for this awesome book.

The lovely author is my first cousin! I decided to order the rest of her books and read them in the order in which she wrote them. I highly recommend her writings to anyone.

Sent it back

This is about Molly, a teen girl with a service dog, Pixel, who helps her cope with her panic attacks. She becomes friends with a homeless girl, Red, who has some mental issues of her own. Molly decides to help reunite her with her family before Christmas. I enjoyed this unique teen fiction book written in verse. It goes very quick and I liked the story line. It touches on PTSD, suicide in addition to homelessness, mental illness and guilt. It was interesting to see her make friends with Red and also Cristo and his cat! Although this book deals with some heavy subjects, it is not dark at all but pretty uplifting.

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