

Zarr, Sara. **Once was Lost** 214p.

*Realistic Fiction*

*Recommended for Grades 9-12*

As summer arrives, Samara notices that her family isn't perfect. Her mother runs into problems when she is faced with a DUI and must stay in rehab. Without her mother around, there seems to be no place called "home". While her mother is away, her father becomes close with another woman in the church community. Sam feels this is his way of happiness, but it makes her uncomfortable. Sam's father is always busy helping the people of the church and never has the time to talk to Sam about how she feels. Then Pineview is struck with a horrific tragedy, a missing thirteen year old girl named Jody. As everyone in the community pitches in to help find Jody, Sam starts to question her faith in God and why he would put her in such horrible situations. She has no one to vent her problems to, until she finds the one person who feels comfortable to do the same with her. This enables her to become close to someone who she never thought would understand her problems. She knows that miracles are unlikely, but possible.

This story symbolizes the reality we face today and how we handle these problems within ourselves. The author uses questions that help express what the character is thinking. As the reader, we are clearly able to be put "in the characters' shoes". The story is written so that we can relate our own problems to her and see the emotions that are affected by the results of their actions. The growth of each event in this story is perfectly spaced and easy to follow. Overall, the novel makes the reader realize that they should be thankful for the things that make them happy.

- Jillian S.