



Eight Seconds

Jean Ferris

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Each ride on the bucking bull is a lesson in pain. Each landing on the packed dirt is a jarring reminder of reality. Rodeo camp is a tough way to spend a summer, but John is having the time of his life. No clingy girlfriends, no nagging moms, no annoying sisters. Just him and the guys and the biggest bulls he's ever seen. All he has to do is stay on a bull for eight seconds. It may feel like an eternity to his aching body, but for once John feels in control of his own fate. Then he learns his new rodeo buddy Kit is gay. Shaken by the news, he tries to deal with the other guys' reactions and his own self-doubts.

Suddenly, riding a bull seems easy. . . .

Eight Seconds Details

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Author : Jean Ferris

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From Reader Review Eight Seconds for online ebook

Megan says

I really liked the country story about a young bull rider. It did however take me for a loop, and one that some people may not be okay with for a young person. I thought that it shows that not everyone is the same and that it is okay, too.

Alex says

Stars: 4.5/5

Overall

This is not an easy or light reading, although it's not too heavy either. It's a nice balance of story and teenage sexuality drama. Although the topic is nothing new, I feel like the way the story was handled was fresh, making it a new and interesting story. While I really enjoyed this story, I can see some people taking issue with its not-completely-happy ending. I struggled with it myself, but I felt the decisions the author made were appropriate for the story and the lessons that John learns.

Strengths

The writing is pretty easy going, matching the character, who is pretty laid back most of the time, but has a temper when his buttons are pushed. It was straight forward and well paced and overall made for an enjoyable read.

John is a likeable character, although he is flawed (he has a temper, biases, and acts like the teenager he is). But he's still a young man struggling to deal with things in his life and he acts like many teenagers do, and has to face those consequences. I think what I liked most about him is that he never complained about things being unfair or trying to take things back (even if he wishes he could). Instead he focuses on where he's at and what he needs to do—and what he should do. There are various side characters that are nice and varied, all of whom help make John who he is. I also liked Kit, even though some of the things he did/choose were just as hard to deal with as what John did/choose.

While there are some difficult things that happen in this story, and some difficult decisions that the characters make (many of which I disagree with, personally), I really enjoyed the story with its different resolution and some of the "morals" it teaches (to the main character, but not in a preachy way). I also liked the bull riding/western environment, which fit into the story without being too heavy handed in its role.

Weaknesses

Not really a weakness, but I didn't like the ending. It was handled well, and I knew it was coming because of what I read in someone else's review, but ... well, you'll have to see for yourself.

The cover that I had makes it seem like the main cast is young teens when they are actually all 18 or older. While I like the set up and the emotion behind it, I think it would dissuade younger people from reading it, which is a shame.

Be sure to check out my other reviews on my blog.

Bill says

During the summer before his senior year, John who lives on a Texas ranch goes to a rodeo school and learns to become a bull-rider. There he meets Kit a 19 year old college student who happens to be a politically active Gay guy, unknown to John and his friends.

John and Kit click in a friendship in a way John has never experienced before. This all sets John into an intense personal re-examination and self-discovery. This conflict drives the novel which becomes even more intense when John and his friends learn Kit is Gay. John can't deal and explodes, damaging friendships.

What I find special about this book is that it seems so real and not idealized. There is an open ending which allows readers to put themselves into the interpretation of the story and its continuance. I quite identified with John through events in my own life. While it is promoted as a YA novel, it is much more I think. It had meaning and remembrances for me 5 decades after my own coming of age.

Highly recommended for YA's and adults of any age. A solid 8 of 10 stars,

Lydia says

Ferris structures an interesting tale, based in cowboy country, of teenage boys who become interested in rodeo. The story is interesting and portrays a sense of the farm life of teens raised in a truly rural environment. In this case, there is a boy who has had heart surgery who lost a year of school. He is 18 yrs. old, but will only be a senior in high school. I'm unsure why she gave her protagonist this particular characterization given the rest of the content of the novel. John goes to rodeo camp, decides he wants to be a bull rider, meets a college student who his college-aged sister knows is involved in the Lambda society.

The ending of this book has a certain elegance, although the middle of book lacks some of the emotional highs and lows. This is a short novel (186 pgs.) and as a result there are some elements that feel they are not given enough room to develop. Of all the characters, I found Clementine (Clemmie), John's youngest sister, the most engaging. Her innocence and naivete lends a special element of realism to the entire novel.

While I do recommend this novel, I also would warn readers about the lack of depth to the overall theme.

Sara says

High-school cowboy (John) figures out he is gay when he falls in love with Kit, a slightly older gay rodeo cowboy. John doesn't end up in a romance with Kit, which feels realistic, though not satisfying if the reader is looking for a romance. Clunky writing in some parts, unfortunately. I guess I would rate it 3 stars for a reader looking for a teen gay relationship novel.

Jeffrey says

Ferris, Jean / Eight seconds
Harcourt 2000

John Ritchie is heading off to rodeo camp; he can't wait to be on his own, at least for a week, away the sisters, his mom and dad, the chores on the ranch. He knows exactly what he wants to do – ride bulls.

On this second day at camp he meets Kit Crowe, and John feels an immediate physical / spiritual attraction, he is drawn to Kit in a way he cannot really understand. Kit is also interested in bull riding. He has a natural balance and grace while he is on this two thousand pound animal. They become friends.

When he returns home from camp John mentions Kit to his older sister Caroline, she went to high school with Kit and is attending the same college. She remembers Kit and mentions that he is involved with the Lambda Society – that means he is gay.

What does John do now, considering his budding friendship and unexplainable attraction?

jazmin says

(3.5 stars) aaaaargh I'm so frustrated about the ending haha

Jennifer Lavoie says

I wanted to give this book 4 stars originally just because it didn't have the ending I wanted, but in the end I couldn't justify that. I loved this book. It may not have had the happy ending I love, but it was so realistic because of that. Both Kit and John were excellent characters and I was able to connect with both. Some of the things Kit said made me stop to think, and I really felt for what John was going through on his journey to discover himself. Really a great read.

Malana says

i love rodeo type stuff if u like this book u sould read it

Beth says

John thinks that when he had open-heart surgery as a child, maybe the doctors forgot to replace an essential piece, because he doesn't want to marry Kelsey, his girlfriend who is pushing for an after-graduation commitment. Eager to escape, John is thrilled when his dad signs him up for rodeo camp, where he discovers an odd and deep kinship with Kit.

Upon his return home, John is stunned to learn that the confident and poised young man is openly gay at his college. John is forced to make fast and tough choices about his views on homosexuality as the news spreads. The local bully, Russ, begins tormenting Kit at local rodeos - and then finds John guilty by association. In a startling climax, John blames Kit for his confusion and scapegoathood and attacks him, pushed over the edge by Russ's comments.

It takes a little too long for the protagonist to realize what the reader already suspects: that John too may be gay. His inner turmoil is only beginning when the book ends. To give her credit, Ferris doesn't take the easy way out, and the ending is not what most readers will be rooting for, but it is a fitting one that will hopefully tug at heartstrings and increase awareness and tolerance.

The book is a step in the right direction for teaching tolerance and breaking down stereotypes. The cover art is a bit juvenile. The cowboy on the cover looks like a scrawny kid in a too-big hat, and may be a turnoff to teens, and they will miss out on a wonderful story about the things you can't control - and the things you can. Eight Seconds is definitely another contender for best books for young adults from Ferris, and the subject matter itself demands purchase; libraries with small budget may want to wait for the paperback in the hopes of a more attractive cover.

Kathy says

Eighteen-year-old John is just about to watch his best friends graduate from high school. He would have been graduating with them too, if he hadn't skipped a year when he had heart surgery as child. But the summer ahead is looking good when his father gives him a surprise gift: a week at rodeo camp! John is raring to go and decides he wants to give bull-riding a try. While at camp he meets Kit, a tough young bull-rider, and begins to develop a friendship with him. When John finds out that Kit is gay it brings up a lot of questions for him, including many about himself. Eight Seconds is a fast-paced coming-of-age story set amid the rough-and-tumble world of rodeo cowboys. Ferris does an admirable job of creating believable characters and exploring the idea of what it really means to accept yourself and your friends.

Mickaela says

Eight Seconds is an amazing book. It is one of those that keeps the reader intrigued throughout the entire story. Of course it's aimed at the teenage reader. Although the book's central character is an 18-year-old guy girls too will be pulled into the story's constantly changing relationships. His sense of self-discovery during his late teens is one of the most interesting elements to this story.

Stephen says

John a young man, still in high school feels surrounded by females what with his mother, his girlfriend, and his five sisters.

Getting away for a week at a rodeo prep camp sounds great and there he meets and befriends Kit a handsome self assured guy who goes to college with his older sister. Kit is a natural bull rider and the two quickly strike up a friendship.

When he returns home and his sister tells John that Kit is openly gay on campus, John's world is rocked.

Soon he's questioning many things that he'd previously taken for granted.

This book is unusual and covers ground that not a lot of coming out stories cover from a perspective that's uncommon. But then, my heroes have always been cowboys. I genuinely liked most all of the characters in this story and read the book pretty much in one sitting. By the end I wanted more. But even though you don't always get what you want in this book you get what you need.

Well worth the time. Now that I'm done, I've got several new friends that I'm gonna miss.

Jarrad L says

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be a popular bull rider at the age of 17? A guy by the name of John always wanted to be the best bull rider out there, and one day his dad surprised him with something that changed his view on bull riding. If you want to be inspired to pursue something, you should read *Eight Seconds* by Jean Ferris. John kept practicing and he eventually mastered all of his riding abilities that in the end led to a great reward.

One thing I didn't like that happened in this story is that John was afraid to hang around his best friend, Kit, after he started to get bullied. Part way through the book, John started to stay at home all of the time and did everything possible to avoid Kit and everyone else. At different times in the book, he tried to talk to him again, but Kit wanted nothing to do with him. Not only did he ignore Kit, but his other friend, Bobby was treated the same way. Later on, John realized he was fighting to get his friends back.

I liked how this book was easy to read and understand what was going on at all times. The author was also very good with specific details that happened. At times it felt like you were actually there when the story took place, it was that clear. Also, I liked how this book is inspiring and encourages you to keep doing what you like and not give up after you fall off the bull.

All in all, *Eight Seconds* is all about thrill seeking and taking chances. Once I started reading it, it was hard to stop because you never knew what would happen next to one of the amateur bull riders. It also taught me that if a high schooler in the book can ride bulls like a professional, then you can be successful at whatever it is you like to do. I would recommend *Eight Seconds* to all of the thrill seekers who like to do crazy things.

Sue J says

A realistic look at life...no sugar coating or expected results. It was almost a new concept that people reap the 'benefits' of their actions. Very often in young adult literature that is not the case!
