



How to Breathe Underwater

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Kate's father has been pressuring her to be perfect for her whole life, pushing her to be the best swimmer she can be. But when Kate finds her dad cheating on her mom, Kate's perfect world comes crashing down, and Kate is forced to leave home and the swim team she's been a part of her whole life.

Now in a new home, new school, and faced with the prospect of starting over, Kate isn't so sure that swimming is what she wants anymore. But when she decides to quit, her whole world seems to fall apart. But when Kate gets to know Michael, the cute boy that lives across the hall, she starts to think that starting over might not be so bad. There's only one problem: Michael has a girlfriend.

As the pressures of love, family, and success press down on her, can Kate keep her head above water?

How to Breathe Underwater Details

Date : Published August 14th 2018 by Macmillan/Swoon Reads

ISBN : 9781250136114

Author : Vicky Skinner

Format : ebook 304 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Romance

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Lauren says

Prior to starting Vickey Skinner's How to Breathe Underwater, I hadn't heard too much about it. However, I can never resist a pretty cover and a synopsis that screams romance and contemporary goodness so I eagerly dove in.

The result? How to Breathe Underwater was one heck of a treat! Romantic, emotional, and funny, How to Breathe Underwater managed to wow me the whole way through.

How to Breathe Underwater introduces Kate, a high school junior, who isn't having the best year. She's dealing with family drama, friend drama, and starting all over at a new school. She's trying her best to be positive, but it's hard to do when everything seems to be going to wrong. I adored Kate from the get-go. She was sweet and kind, and I loved seeing her bloom in her new environment. I also appreciated how she always tried her best to do the right thing. Sometimes it all still blew up in her face, but you could tell she was always coming from a good place.

Michael, the love interest in this, was SWOONY as heck! From the moment he was introduced I was praying he would be the one. He was the perfect mix of moody and light, and I loved the chemistry between him and Kate. It flowed well, and, more importantly, it made it easy to root for them!

In addition to Michael and Kate, Vickey introduces a variety of other characters - Kate's friends, family, etc. Every single character brought something special to the book, and I loved pretty much every single one of them (well, besides Kate's dad...he was a bit of a jerk...scratch that a HUGE jerk). Vickey did a great job of developing everyone, and while I wish there had been more of them, I was 100% content with what I got.

The plot in this mainly involves romance and creating a new life when everything gets turned upside down. I always love a starting fresh story line, and that rang true here. It was exciting to be there every step of the way with Kate. The romance in this had so much wonderful build up - there were so many times I was like "just kiss already!" but let me tell you, the wait was worth it in the end!

Overall, summer may soon be coming to an end, but that doesn't mean there isn't time to fit some more summer reading in! How to Breathe Underwater should definitely be on your end of summer reading lists. It's sweet, heartwarming, and charming - I simply adored it and I think many others will as well!

Katy Upperman says

Three Awesome Things About HOW TO BREATH UNDERWATER

1. Fully developed cast. While Kate is the protagonist of this debut, she's not the only character with layers and flaws and problems. Her parents, sister, love interest, and friends all have challenges that play out alongside Kate's. I appreciate when a story feels as complicated as real life, and HTBU definitely does.
2. Sweet, slow-burn romance. Love doesn't come easy for Kate and her v. cute salsa dancing neighbor, Michael, which means that when they finally begin to work things out, the payoff is so worth it.
3. Skillful prose. For a book with a lot of heavy themes, HTBU remains a smooth and endearing read. Vicky infuses the novel with thoughtful commentary and just the right amount of humor, making it feel like a

wonderful escape.

Check this one out when it debuts August, 2018!

Candyce Kirk says

3.5 stars

How to Breather Underwater sucked me in from the start. This author's writing style is really enjoyable. We see a lot of books in the YA genre about teenagers that end up having some family problems. This was the first one I read where the main character starts questioning her passion for the sport she thought she loved.

Kate is really hurt when she finds out her father has been cheating on her mother. Her mother moves them to another city and this turns her life upside down. Another school, home and new swimming team. That's when things get tricky though, she starts freaking out at the thought of swimming or even being in a pool.

Not only is she in a new location, but her schedule is different as well. No more intensive swimming schedule, diet and more time for a social life. Kate meets Michael (her neighbor) and they connect. He has some problems of his own, buts she trusts him.

I loved reading about Kate trying to adjust to her new life and how she feels. Of course she's hurt and doesn't know what to think of her father anymore, let alone swimming. Her best friend is in a different own and constantly swimming with her father and she feels a bit betrayed.

I loved Michael's character and he was very strong for a boy his age. Dealing with family issues will do that I guess, but not everyone can handle that. He's also a rock for Kate when things fall apart for her. I think that made it easier for Kate to decide not to swim for awhile and think about what she really wanted.

Kate's journey was a very interesting one and I am happy this author wrote it. Even though her relationship with her Dad became hurtful, she became closer with her mother and sister. The unconditional love they had for each other was very touching.

There were a few things that bugged me though, I felt like we missed some information about Michael. I know this was Kate's story, but Michael was a big part of it as well. His story would've been so much more real if maybe we got his POV as well.

Kate's sister has some issues of her own and in ways I didn't completely feel that it fit in this story. While it did, it didn't get a lot of attention, so it kind of felt out of place. Even though I loved how her story ended!

Also, the way Kate is treated when her friends think she was cheating with Michael. Yes, it may have seemed that way and things may have gone fast, but I hated how she was treated. Then again, I know that high school can work this way.

All in all, I did enjoy Kate's journey and this story. I wouldn't even mind reading another book to see how all of these characters are doing in college. I even think Ben should get his own story, haha.

Samantha (WLABB) says

Kate spent the last ten years of her life working to be the best in order to earn her father's love, until he betrayed her and her family. Forced to start over in a new town, in a new school, in a new home, she had to figure out what swimming really meant to her, and if it even still belonged in her life.

- Pro: I am a fan of feeling the feels, and Skinner definitely delivered. Kate's anguish with separating swimming from her father was palpable. Her emotions were raw and real, and I really felt her pain as she struggled with trying to remember why she swam or if she ever enjoyed it at all.
- Pro: Kate also wrestled with who she was without swimming. I love journeys of self discovery, and Kate had a long journey ahead of her. But I had faith in Kate. She had a lot more inner strength than she thought she did, and I found myself rooting for her to find herself and find some peace.
- Pro: Michael and Kate together was romance gold for me. They had a great connection, and I really felt the stirrings of love between them. The situation was a little bit awkward, but I thought Skinner built a good enough case to explain the hows and whys, and I was ok with all of it.
- Pro: The relationship between Kate and her sister was pretty wonderful. The whole family was kind of falling apart, but they were all still there for each other.
- Pro: The final chapters were really strong for me. There were a lot of really joyful things that happened, which left me in a happy place. I was really glad with the path Skinner chose for these characters.
- Pro: I am a fan of sports in books, and I was really glad that swimming was featured quite prominently in this story. The life of an elite athlete fascinates me, and getting a peek into their lives is always so eye-opening.

Overall: A sweet, touching, painful, and sometimes fun story of one girl's quest to find herself and begin anew.

*ARC provided in exchange for an honest review.

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Maggie says

Oh, my heart. What a deep, thoughtful look into love and loss in its many forms. Everyone can relate to Kate and Michael's struggles and triumphs in some way or another, even if you're not a star swimmer or above-average salsa dancer. :) I can't wait for this book to be out in the world so that I can recommend it highly (and face it out at every bookstore I see it at!)

Simant ♥ Flipping Through the Pages says

Full review on: Flipping Through the Pages

How to Breathe Underwater is a beautiful book taking you through self-discovery and realization. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. It takes you through love and loss and what a thoughtful book it is.

This story is about Kate who is a state-championship winner in swimming. She has spent the last 10 years of her life swimming and competing to please her father, who is also her swim coach. But her father betrays her and her family. Kate moves to a new city with her mom. She tries to decide what swimming really means for her.

She realizes that while she loves swimming and water, she really hate competing. She was doing all of the competing to just please her father who made her work harder every time. Now that she doesn't have to please him anymore, she quits swimming in her new school. She has to find a new path for her and she is trying to understand all the changes that occurred in her life after she moved to the new city.

I really loved the overall journey of Kate from her self-realization to achieving the things that actually mattered to her. She proved to be a strong character as the story progresses. She made mistakes like all teenagers do. But she was never afraid of consequences and was always ready to face them. Through all of her struggles, she learns to love and to open her heart.

Michael was the love interest of Kate who lived down the hall in her building. She hadn't known at first that he had a girlfriend and she started liking him. But when she found out about his girlfriend, it was too late for her to retreat her feeling. **Between swim classes and salsa lessons, she falls for him and so does he.**

I totally shipped this couple and their romance was so adorable. Before they were romantically involved, they were friends and there were some quite cute moments in that friendship. Michael had a habit of smoking, because of her mother, but Kate helped her in quitting it. Both had their own problems to deal with and in this way, they found solace in each other's company.

I loved all the side characters. They were very well developed.

I really liked how well Vicky Skinner has included so many heavy themes in this otherwise simple story. **The issues are talked about as drama but in actual they never felt dramatic?** Michael's mom was in terrible condition because of smoking and he also was habitual to it. This shows how parents actions can make impressions on a child's life. **There are lots of teen-relevant issues shown like dealing with parents' divorce, father-daughter relationship, falling for your friend's guy, moving in new town and experiencing new love, and I think each of these things has perfectly been captured in the story.**

Overall, **this is a sweet and painful story of one girl's quest to find herself and starting her life fresh.** With so many important issues handled, Vicky Skinner has shown a story dealing with love and loss in its various forms. If you like reading contemporary with love, loss, drama and challenging relationships, then this book is for you. Kate would make you love her.

Rebecca June says

Thank you Vicky Skinner, Swoon Reads, and Xpresso Book Tours for a free eArc of this book in exchange for an honest review. This review was originally posted on my blog, June Reads Books.

"Michael didn't expect anything from me. My father, my mother, even Lily, they all expected something from

me, whether I was ready to give it or not. But Michael just looked at me like he was waiting. He was waiting to see what I would do next, what I would say next, who I would be in the next ten minutes" (p. 90).

After Kate's father successfully ruins Kate's life by getting caught cheating by the WHOLE swim team, Kate's mother moves them out to Seattle to be close to her college-age sister, Lily. Not only does Kate need to deal with a wave of hurt, she also needs to get used to a new city, a new school, and being away from her best friend. Can anyone do that gracefully? Luckily, Kate's mom is one of those people persons and has made friends with people in their building before they're even unpacked--including this super cute boy named Michael.

Michael from the get-go is kind and funny. Even though Kate's mom has already told him everything anyone needs to know about Kate, he still wants to know more and really invests in her. He's one of those characters that radiates sunshine and you just can't be sad when he's in the scene. Unfortunately, his life presents its own set of challenges, specifically his mother, who's cough just keeps getting worse and worse.

It's clear that Kate and Michael deal with their struggles in different ways--Kate is angry at her dad and scared of life without swimming, terrified of learning how to breath again. She tries to make the most of her situation by making friends, but her emotions are fairly close to the surface. Michael pushes his emotions down, instead focusing on being positive and having fun. As they wrestle through the hand life has dealt them, I loved seeing it shape who they are, how to support each other, and how they feel about each other. My heart couldn't get anymore full.

While Kate has a lot of anger and lashes out sometimes, I found all the characters to be redeeming and show positive growth. Skinner's writing is captivating and uplifting, while still facing the conflicts head-on. Everything about this book is feel-good and I'm all about it.

Lisa Super says

The perfect end-of-summer read to enjoy by the pool. I flew through this one and highly recommend for someone wanting a romance that's light and hopeful, but still deals with some darker issues that give it a little edge. I also adored the sibling relationship between Kate and Lily.

Alexis Neuville says

Great story that made me laugh, cry, and super happy. Has a lot going on within the pages, but does a really good job at handling all the different subplots.

Tina says

There's a lot to unravel here, so bear with me. I'm still in awe of the profound emotional roller coaster I just experienced with this heartfelt story. Skinner has a way with words that elicits your emotions and keeps you engaged page after page.

Kate is a fairly average teenager, save for one big exception, she's the best swimmer in the state. With her dad as her coach constantly pushing her to do more, be better, work harder, etc. there's a lot of emotional baggage tied into her sport. When Kate's life turns upside down after her dad's affair becomes public, it's more than just a relocation. It is the first time Kate really questions whether she wants to keep swimming now that she's not striving for her father's attention.

I imagine switching schools after growing up with the same team is difficult in itself, then add the pressure of being "the best", any kid would have a hard time. Kate manages to navigate her new circumstances with less than stellar grace and a few bad choices to makes things more challenging. Crushing on the boy next door is adorable and sweet, but navigating through an existing girlfriend and trying to make new friends does not make it easy.

Kate's struggles with her new family life are an integral part of the story. Divorce is a difficult topic to write about, but Skinner does an exceptional job keeping things just the right amount of heavy without feeling overwhelming. It was important that we see how the divorce is affecting Kate's mom and sister as well. The camaraderie of their shared heartache is a refreshingly honest look at the emotional toll divorce can have on a family.

Michael and Kate's friendship is the bright light in an otherwise tumultuous world. There's one particular scene that stands out in my mind where they sit in the hallway across from each other in the middle of the night eating ice cream. That sweet moment of friendship made me wish I had a neighbor like that, especially as I suffered from insomnia in high school too. I found their story endearing and frustrating at the same time. It is a splendid story fraught with awkward moments, sweet gestures, and a fair amount of hardship.

I highly recommend this book to readers who enjoy a heartfelt look at what strengths lie in moving on and forgiveness.

Dewey says

While there were small portions of this that I enjoyed, I think my favorite thing about it was that it was short enough to finish reading in a few hours on my plane ride to Washington DC. Just reading the synopsis clues you in on what the book will be like--kind of choppy, not always very well thought out, and a little repetitive.

This book had a lot going on. Kate's dad cheats on her mom, resulting in chapter one: Kate moves to Portland with her mom. In the aftermath of The Affair, (view spoiler) With so many big conflicts, there wasn't enough time to devote to all of it, and it left everything feeling rushed and under-developed.

(view spoiler)

(view spoiler)

I could go on and on about the things in this book that got under my skin, but it feels like overkill. At the end of the day...I was intrigued by the premise of this book, but it squandered its potential. With so many amazing books out there, this one is lackluster. There are better options out there. Read one of those.

Karlita | Tale Out Loud says

Full Review at [Tale Out Loud](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

Once more, I decided to test my reading choice and went blind on this book. And it seems like I had another fantastic, unforgettable experience because I was instantly hooked the moment I started reading the book.

This story shows how everything turned out differently for Kate because she found herself caught in the middle of knowing who she really is and what she truly wants in life. Her love-hate relationship with the pool and memories of her father only gave her anxiety and panic episodes, and soon became a traumatic event for her that she needs to overcome.

Like everyone else, Kate experienced the same effects of toxic stress dealt from having helicopter parents. Her character is a real depiction of those children, young adults and sometimes, even adults who was put under an enormous amount of pressure and expectations by their parents who gear them up towards success.

I love how genuine her character was. Kate was a sixteen year old who struggled being the *new girl*, trying to adjust with her new life whilst fighting a crush over someone's boyfriend, added a teenage feels that I'm sure most of us experienced when we were in high school. She also learned to be free from every expectations and gain not her father, mother or even her sister's approval but her own, which was brave and admirable.

On the other hand, I understand why Lily, Kate's older sister, ditched her own wedding even if she knew how much she loves Tom. The divorce of her parents gave her too much doubt that she feared her own relationship would end up to be like theirs. **She may always be there for Kate but in the end, both of them are just the same—drowning, struggling to keep up with the wave of life.**

That same goes with Michael. His tremendous love for his mother was truly touching and heart breaking and yet scary because he might be taking good care of his mother, but he wasn't taking good care of himself. **The pain both him and Kate experienced was what brought them together making the slow burn romance sweet and tragic all at the same time.** And although his relationship with Kate somehow started as awkward, I love how in every furtive glance, comforting gestures and simple touch, the chemistry between them could steal each page time.

Michael's character also shows how smoking may gave emotional comfort but like any other kind of addiction, the effect was totally frightening. He may have fought it once with Kate's help but the moment he admitted he went smoking again but thriving to be better, was a real life story.

The issue about using drugs in the world of sports was also brought through Harris' character that rooted from peer pressure. He wanted to be as good as Kate that he resorted the easiest way he knew.

The emotional depth pulled in each character including the supporting ones was what made this book easy to read. From Harris, Patrice to Coach Masterson and Kate's mother, **Vicky Skinner was able to write a story that vibrated a deeper connection between her readers and those of her characters.**

The writing style brought me into a new journey of emotions, making me feel what they feel. And considering this, the story ended quite satisfying and eventful given that everyone may not have their own happily ever after but rather, the author leave the characters at their own pace.

How to Breathe Underwater is a story that renders how we go on *freestyle* when it's too much and giving our best stroke when it is not enough. It is a heartfelt, moving story about pain, loss and new beginnings.

***Thank you to NetGalley, MacMillian Children's Publishing Group – Swoon Reads, Xpresso Book Tours and Vicky Skinner for providing me an eARC in exchange for a fair and honest review!

Ms. Nguyen says

Kate's world is turned upside down when her dad (and swim coach) is caught making out with a swim mom in his office.. in front of everybody. Her mom uproots her to be closer to her engaged sister.. and the rest is.. a boring, cliched story.

I skimmed the last few chapters of this book because I just didn't want to waste precious reading time. Kate is a character that's hard to like or empathize with. The writing is mediocre and just nothing special. The insta love is cringey and silly. And the competing plot lines makes for a plot driven story-- not a complex character analysis.

Samantha Hastings says

It's definitely a book to dive into! Kate is a likable and relate-able character who is dealing with her parent's messy divorce, moving, a new love, and swimming. Kate is angry at her father (who is also her former swim coach) for pressuring her to swim so hard in hopes of gaining his elusive approval. The author gives a realistic and important look at the pressure parents can put on their teens when they compete in sports. Kate has to decide for herself if she wants to compete in swimming or just enjoy the water. Meanwhile, her best friend isn't answering her calls, her sister got cold feet on her wedding-day, her mom is sad, and the boy that Kate likes already has a girlfriend. The book is packed with excellent character development and Kate's ultimate resolution rings true. The book also explores the themes of grief, mourning, and forgiveness in a thought-provoking, but not preachy way.

Amelia Brunskill says

This book takes a heartfelt look at how it can feel to move to a new school, have a crush on someone who is already spoken for, and deal with parental expectations that have become more of a burden than a blessing. I enjoyed the characters, and I also appreciated what felt like an insider's look into the world of competitive swimming.
