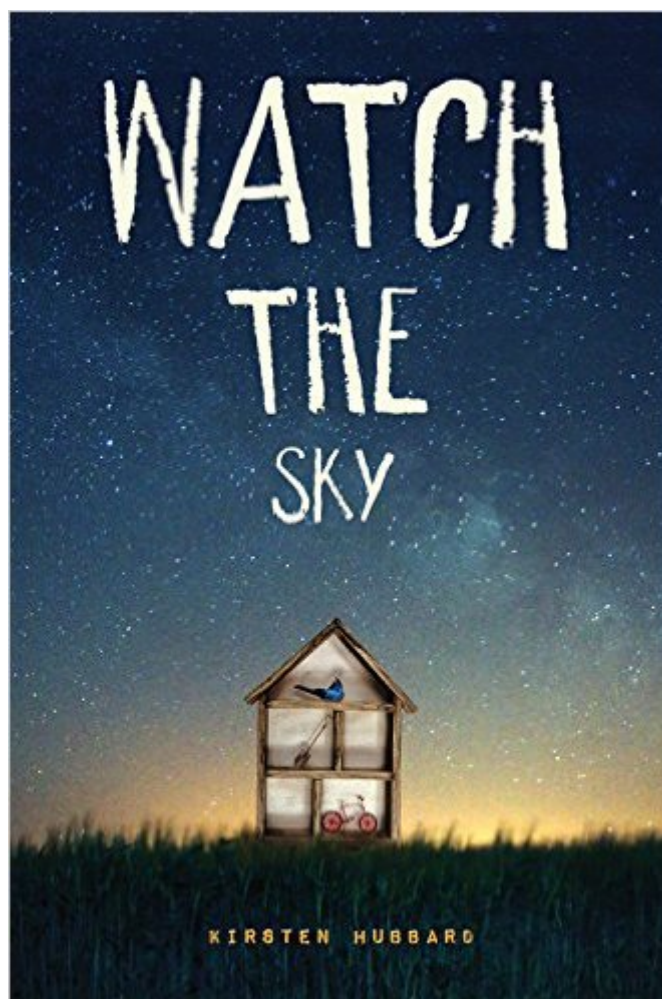


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# Watch The Sky



## Synopsis

The signs are everywhere, Jory's stepfather, Caleb, says. Red leaves in the springtime. Pages torn from a library book. All the fish in the aquarium facing the same way. A cracked egg with twin yolks. Everywhere and anywhere. And because of them Jory's life is far from ordinary. He must follow a very specific set of rules: don't trust anyone outside the family, have your works at the ready just in case, and always, always watch out for the signs. The end is coming, and they must be prepared. School is Jory's only escape from Caleb's tight grasp, and with the help of new friends Jory begins to explore a world beyond his family's farm. As Jory's friendships grow, Caleb notifies Jory's mother and siblings that the time has come for final preparations. They begin an exhausting schedule digging a mysterious tunnel in anticipation of the disaster. But as the hold gets deeper, so does the family's doubt about whether Caleb's prophecy is true. When the stark reality of his stepfather's plans becomes clear, Jory must choose between living his own life or following Caleb, shutting his eyes to the bright world he's just begun to see.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Jory Birch has always been told to watch for Signs. Signs could be a meteor shower in the sky, a newspaper splattered with white paint, a little girl found in the pumpkin patch. Caleb, Jory's step-father, is a self-professed expert in Signs and knows they herald an oncoming danger that the

family must protect themselves from. To prepare for this unseen danger, he enlists the family's help in digging a large tunnel in the giant canyon outside their farmhouse. With each hole Jory begins to dig, he feels himself questioning their way of life and wanting to break free. But how can he when family means everything and disobeying Caleb might be a matter of life or death? Coming in at only 262 pages, it would seem like *WATCH THE SKY* is a novel you could read quickly. Some could probably devour it in one sitting. But I think Kristen Hubbard's middle-grade debut requires more than that. *WATCH THE SKY* is a novel that unravels slowly, which is not necessarily a bad thing. It's just that you should probably take your time with it, like Jory, our protagonist, takes his time understanding the world around him. I admired Jory's strength in all this. I think everyone can understand the consequences of keeping a secret. But Jory has so many. He can't tell anyone about his sister, Kit, who doesn't speak and who appeared one day in the garden. He can't tell anyone about the tunnel the family is digging in the canyon or that they're stockpiling goods. There really isn't much that Jory can say to his classmates and teachers, and he's very isolated because of it. Despite all of that, he remains loyal to his family and protective of them, especially Kit. He's extremely intelligent and it's so frustrating that he's not able to showcase this more.

\*I received this book from the Disney Book Group through NetGalley in exchange for my honest review.\* "Life's not all doom and gloom, Jory Birch." The signs are everywhere, Jory's stepfather, Caleb, says. Red leaves in the springtime. Pages torn from a library book. All the fish in the aquarium facing the same way. A cracked egg with twin yolks. Everywhere and anywhere. And because of them Jory's life is far from ordinary. He must follow a very specific set of rules: don't trust anyone outside the family, have your works at the ready just in case, and always, always watch out for the signs. The end is coming, and they must be prepared. School is Jory's only escape from Caleb's tight grasp, and with the help of new friends Jory begins to explore a world beyond his family's farm. As Jory's friendships grow, Caleb notifies Jory's mother and siblings that the time has come for final preparations. They begin an exhausting schedule digging a mysterious tunnel in anticipation of the disaster. But as the hole gets deeper, so does the family's doubt about whether Caleb's prophecy is true. When the stark reality of his stepfather's plans becomes clear, Jory must choose between living his own life or following Caleb, shutting his eyes to the bright world he's just begun to see. *Watch the Sky* had me intrigued from the first few pages. It's definitely different than what I've been reading. This is also the first middle grade book I've read to review. I think the story flowed pretty well. It's a definite page turner because I wanted to know what the "danger" was, I

wanted to know what they were preparing for!"But I realized something. When you spend so much of your life worried about the future...you forget to live.

This book is really tough to review because I loved it, right up until the very end, when I thought, "Wait? That's it?" Still, I've given myself a little time to ponder it, and I think I'm okay with the abrupt ending - mostly. The book follows Jory, whose family is preparing for - something. He's never really quite sure what - he just knows that his stepfather is sure that something bad is coming, and that they need to be prepared. So, they begin to dig a shelter in the canyon out behind their house. Every night, for hours, Jory and his family dig. Meanwhile, Jory's family's new schedule allows him a little more freedom - one day a week, Jory has off so that he can catch up with school. He finds himself spending the time that his family is sleeping with a few kids from school, and he is surprised to find that he actually starts to connect with them - and he likes it. This is something new for him. But balancing his family's secrets (both the canyon and Jory's younger sister who I'll talk about more specifically in my review) and his new life and friendships gets to be very tricky. And Jory starts to wonder if his strange but charismatic stepfather might just be wrong. What I loved: The concept. I've watched TV shows about families who are preparing for an apocalypse of some type or another. There were tons of people who thought the world would end in 2012, and there are still plenty of people who are ready for the end to come in one form or another (you can even buy your own zombie-proof shelter). I find it all kind of fascinating. There's a little part of me that thinks it might not be so horrible to be prepared, just in case, but I'd hate to live in constant fear of "something," which is exactly what Jory's family does.

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