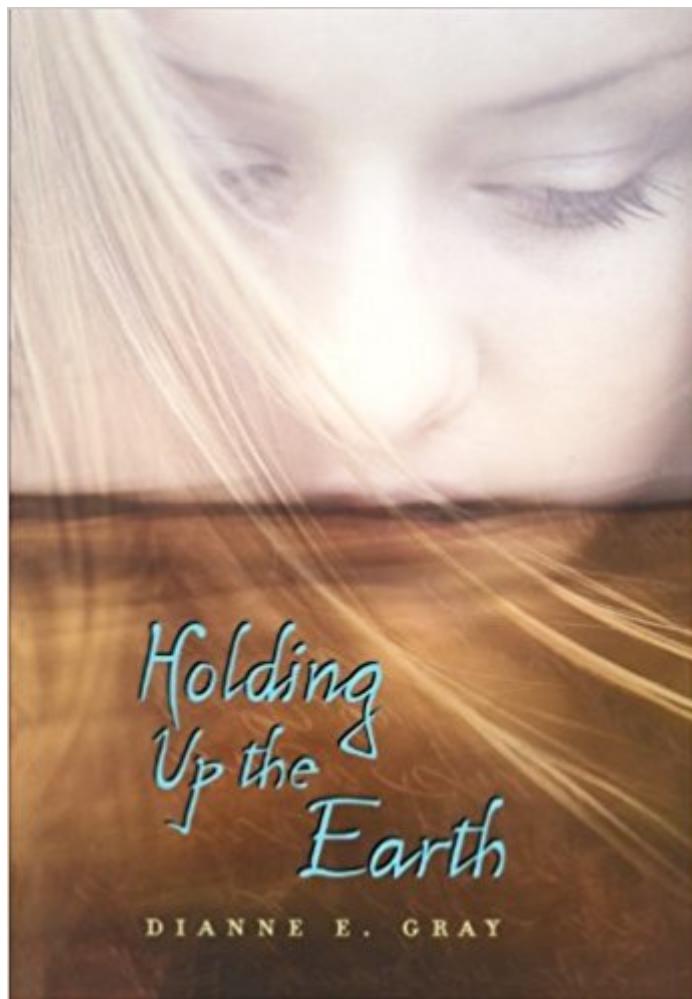


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# Holding Up The Earth



## Synopsis

It has been eight years since Hopeâ™s mom died in a car accident. Eight years of shuffling from foster home to foster home. Eight years of trying to hold on to the memories that tether her to her mother. Now Sarah, Hopeâ™s newest foster mom, has taken her from Minneapolis to spend the summer on the Nebraska farm where Sarah grew up. Hope is set adrift, anchored only by her ever-present and memory-heavy backpack. Accustomed to the clamor of city life, Hope is at first unsettled by the silence that descends over the farm each night. But listening deeply, she begins to hear the quiet: the cricketsâ™ chirp, the windsong, the steady in and out of her own breath. Soon the silence is replaced by voices, like echoes sounding across time â” the voices of girls who inhabited the old farmhouse before her. Reluctantly, Hope begins to stretch down roots in the earth and accept this new family as her own.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Narratives, diaries and letters woven together, often too tidily, tell the stories of four girls from different generations who each find a way to reclaim their lives on a small Nebraska farm. Hope, whose mother died eight years earlier, is 14 when her latest foster mother, Sarah, brings her to the farmDthe site of "earth finds." These archeological treasures, such as barrettes and gold coins, become touchstones for each girl's experience and for Hope's ultimate sense of belonging. Abigail, the daughter of a 19th-century homesteading family unable to meet the demands of the frontier, returns to her prized meadow to die. Rebecca, a hired girl on the farm at the turn of the 20th century, eventually helps to heal the family she works for and marries the son. Her daughter, Anna

(Sarah's mother), still runs the farm, and she and Sarah welcome Hope. Unfortunately, Hope's character does not seem convincing; her struggles are too easily won. Some tying of threads across the girls' narratives is contrived, such as Anna's meeting with Abigail just before she dies and the creation of a "story quilt" at the end. However, the letters and diaries, while uneven, offer some of the more fluid passages here and may sustain readers' interest in this first novel. Ages 10-14. (Oct.)

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Grade 5-8-Gray uses a contemporary character to frame stories of four generations of young teens who lived on a Nebraska farm. Hope, 14, is spending the summer at the childhood home of her latest and most-promising foster parent, Sarah. Sarah's mother, Anna, gives the teen some old letters written by Abby, a pioneer girl who describes the initial breaking of the earth around the homestead in 1869 and the wonder of the meadow beyond the soddy in which she lived. Next, Anna gives Hope her mother's journal, which tells how her stepfather sent her to work for the stern owner who bought the failing farm from Abby's father. Anna then tells Hope her own story, and, finally, Sarah's journal tells of the day the Air Force came to install a nuclear missile silo in the meadow. All of the memoirs are tied together poetically, with significant artifacts and details appearing in each, and the meadow figuring prominently in each woman's experience. While all the narratives are not equally compelling, many themes and symbols create a rich quilt of memories that helps Hope find a place to call home among the generations of women who have inhabited this farm. Elizabeth A. Kaminetz, L. Douglas Wilder Middle School, Richmond, VA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

I thought that 'Holding Up the Earth' was a powerful, moving, and inspiring story. It is beautifully written and tells such a wonderful tale. Fourteen-year-old Hope goes with Sarah, her latest foster mother, to the farm in Nebraska where Sarah grew up. It has been eight years since her mother died and Hope doubts that she will ever find happiness or a real home. Then Anna, Sarah's mother, gives Hope the letters written by a girl named Abigail who was the first girl to ever live on the farm. Abigail was a pioneer and came to Nebraska with her parents in the 1800's. After reading Abigail's story, Hope reads the diary of Rebecca, a hired girl who lived on the farm and was Anna's mother. Hope then discovers Anna and Sarah's stories and meanwhile her mother's story and her own. All of the young women in this story are strong, intelligent, and have made a difference. All of their own stories are intertwined and relate to each other. Certain things, like the cherry wood bedstead and the gold-rimmed china, are present in several generations of women and help the stories flow

together. I think that every girl or woman should read this book because the meaning and hope and lessons it has to share with us are so poignant.

Shifting the point of view as Dianne Gray does in both *Together Apart* and *Holding up the Earth* is not my favorite literary technique, yet she manages it pretty well. In the latter, she actually switches between the voices of five different girls to bind together her story of fourteen-year-old Hope, a foster kid who has been shuffled from home to home since the death of her mom. Hope visits her new foster mom's Nebraska farm and through old letters, a diary, and stories hears the voices of four girls her age who lived there in 1869, 1900, 1936, and 1960. Through their tales, readers are introduced to the life of pioneers and hired hands and of life during the dust bowl and later nuclear testing days. And through Hope's voice, readers learn about farming and small towns, but also something more. May we always have memories that shape us, but may we also always move forward to make new ones. Dianne Gray has written a third book, and based on the strength of her first two books, I'll be checking it out too.

A treasured stretch of land and a lonely 14 year old named Hope lie at the heart of this exquisite story of the ties that bind us to the earth itself and to each other. Hope has spent her life being shuffled from one foster home to the next - until she finds herself with Sarah. A kind and undemanding woman, Sarah takes Hope to her family's farm in Nebraska where, through a series of letters and journals, we come to know the former inhabitants who also loved that same plot of ground. We meet the teenage girl who helped build the original sod house, a mail order bride's daughter who comes to work the land as a hired hand and others, who found pain and hardship as well as peace and joy, under that same Nebraska sky. The author deftly captures the voices and tones of these predecessors - I fell into their worlds so deeply that when the story switched back to Hope, I found I'd forgotten her. This isn't meant to imply that Hope's story isn't as meaningful as those who homesteaded there - what struck me about Hope's modern story is the way that Gray has woven these other loves and lives into Hope's experiences as she unknowingly tries to find a place where she truly belongs. Without getting sentimental or sappy (the end comes right to the edge, but I think she pulls it off), *Holding up the Earth* deals with the issue of losing a loved one with a gentle hand, while also inspiring in readers a love of the earth and the power of belonging. Highly recommended for teenage girls, especially.

The book, *Holding Up the Earth*, was about a girl, Hope, whose mother died when Hope was six.

She went to seven foster families before she went to a lady's named Sarah. This is about how Hope overcomes her mother's death, and learns to live with Sarah. I think that this book is well written, because about every other chapter the author has a diary or a journal explaining what has happened at the farm where they live in the past. I think that this helps you better understand the book. I would recommend this book to someone who likes Realistic Fiction. As far as age groups go I would recommend this book to children ten and up because there are words that younger children probably shouldn't be reading. If you love books that will lift your spirits this is the one for you!

Dianne E. Gray has created a quality fiction book that should be of interest to ALL women!! This book follows young Hope as she travels with her new foster Mom, Sarah, to visit Sarah's Mom, Anna, on a farm in Nebraska. Once there, Anna and Sarah share with Hope letters, journals, and their own personal stories from when they were growing up on this farm at about fourteen or fifteen years of age. The first story takes place from 1869-1870, the second in the 1900s, the third in the 1930s, the fourth in the 1960s, and Hope's in the present. This is a very entertaining and hard to put down book!! Recommended to women of all ages!!

Hope's mom got in an accident. Ever since then she's been in a series of foster homes. Every time she goes to a foster home she takes a keepsake with her. She keeps all of her stuff in an old backpack. When her mother died, at that time, she was living at a foster home with a beautiful meadow, she took her mother's urn and spread it across the meadow. The meadow was so beautiful! She saved a ziplock baggy with some of her mother's ashes in it. When she left that foster home, she was bound and determined to find it again. A few years after the meadow, Hope finally found the perfect family. Anna and Sarah. When Sarah wanted to take Hope to the meadow, Hope didn't realize it was the same meadow she spread her mother's ashes in.

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