

Title: *I Love You So Mochi*
Author: Sarah Kuhn
Genre: Fiction, Bildungsroman

Reviewer name and Grade: Jonathan Z. 10th grade

Date reviewed: 3/28/2020

Summary: The novel *I love you Mochi* by Sarah Kuhn opens up with a first-person perspective of her embarking on a quest of self-discovery. The story initially starts in Japan during the first day of spring break, Kimi Nakamura, the narrator's purpose there is as a tourist. She was supposed to travel along something called the Philosopher's Path which was supposed to help her get her life back together. However, instead of doing so, she follows a girl since she is enraptured by her tiered skirt which was made of 2 different materials. From there, Kimi stumbles upon a completely different location, an outdoor market of some sort. She is now lost and goes back to her original purpose of sketching in her notebook on the Philosopher's Path, just now in an open market.

Afterward, the story goes back in time 1 week to explain how she ultimately ended up in such a place. From there, we follow along with the narrator's story at school, how she helps her friend make a dress made of candy wrappers to ask someone out to getting questioned by the school's advice column writer. However, in the end, the part that stands out the most to the reader was how the narrator personally felt about her life, her mother sacrificed her dreams so hers can become a reality and she wasted an entire semester doing nothing that could help her in the long run. Kimi's grandparents invited her over to see them in Japan over the spring break. At first, Kimi was hesitant about going but after falling into a disagreement with her mother after she learns about her dropping an art class, she decides to go. In Japan, it doesn't take long until we are introduced to another character by the name of Akira.

The story then progresses with a series of events that ultimately result in Kimi asking Akira out and him saying yes. Afterwards, Kimi faces some existential crises and finally comes out realizing that she doesn't want to attend the Liu Academy for arts, and instead, a college for fashion designs. During her stay, she bonds with her grandpa quite easily and in the end, develops a good relationship with her grandma as well. However, in the beginning, her grandma came off as cold and distant to her. Kimi then learns from her grandpa that her grandma didn't even know she was coming, and if she did she wouldn't have liked it since her grandma's relation with Kimi's mother wasn't the greatest.

After a series of struggles and heartbreaks, Kimi finally realizes that she wants to pursue fashion designing instead of drawing and wholeheartedly pursues it. Her relation with Akira takes some shifts and turns but in the end, they end up together, while maintaining a long-distance relationship. Her mother and father accept her decision quite well and the story ends on her presenting some of her new works at an exhibition.

Setting: The story originally takes place in Los Angeles and transition over to Japan, near Kyoto.

Time Period: The story takes place during the present time period.

Main Events: Kimi designs a dress for Bex, She drops out of art class, Her parents find out, she travels to Japan for spring break, She meets Akira in a Mochi costume, They spend 2 days together and then she confesses to him, She bonds with her grandma and realizes that she wants to be a fashion designer, Kimi decides to not go to the Liu Academy for college and instead, one

for fashion, Akira's father can't carry on the Mochi business and that almost ruins their relation, Kimi returns to the States, She is accepted to the college for fashion design and runs a booth at an art exhibition.

Questions:

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for non-fiction) keep you interested?

Yes, the story was fast-paced with a variety of major events that happened with no pause in between chapters.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

I feel like that the book was too fast for its type. Some romance novels may have confessions in simply 2 days but the amount of time an author spends on elaborating that part of the story is generally longer than the time seen in *I love you Mochi*. Furthermore, in the time span of 1 week, Kimi has an existential crisis, cleans up that crisis, gets a boyfriend, is almost dumped, makes her college life decision, rejects her former decision to a prestigious school, heals a rift between her grandparents and her mom that was going on for the past few decades and still manages to complete a variety of projects that would require an average person way over a week.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

This book is suitable for 8th graders and 12th graders. It is suitable for 8th graders since it shows them that you can accomplish anything in your life as long as you set your mind to it. It is also beneficial to 12th graders in showing them you should never think you are set on one path just because of your parents or because you don't believe you can choose another path.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I recommend this book to anybody who feels like they may not be able to accomplish what their intended goals are since this novel starts out on the more bleak tone and slowly on a rollercoaster of ups and downs, ends up on a happier note.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

Some information that may be helpful to people who decide to read this book is some historical background on Japanese culture or at least the food they eat since one of the main connections between Kimi and Akira is the fact that their father's both create mochi for them to eat. It is one of the things they bond over as demonstrated when Akira calls Kimi up to help them during a public demonstration.

Rating:

4 stars: I enjoyed this book and found it worthwhile reading

I give this book 4 stars since it truly was a pleasure to read and was definitely worth my time. For example, the life lesson the book teaches you is that where there is a will, there is away. Although Kimi had to rekindle her purpose and what she truly wanted to do in life, she gave it her best shot and in the end, through hardships and struggles, she succeeds. Her adventures with Akira into the Buddhist's nostrils were unique and intriguing. Other actions such as pounding mochi or simply their adventures on their last night were spectacular. From the specific words that each mochi represented to the development of each character, the novel was truly a work of art. The only downside to this novel is the pacing of it. For me, it was a bit fast, and at times may seem confusing from Kimi's abrupt changes in attitude or Akira's sudden withdrawal from Kimi in the middle of the novel. Overall, this book is amazing to read if you have time in an afternoon.