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Young Adult Book Review - Americanized: Rebel without a Green Card

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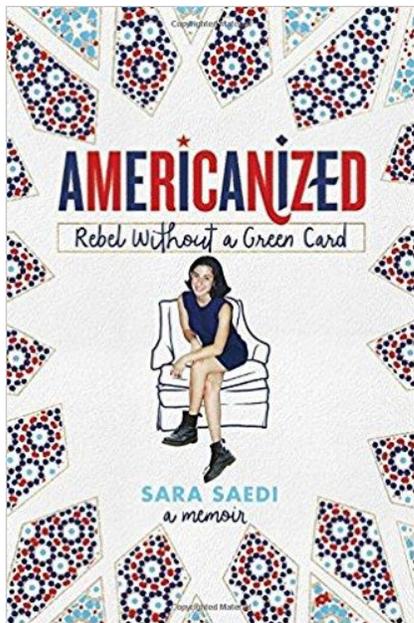
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Young Adult Book Review

AMERICANIZED: REBEL WITHOUT A GREEN CARD



SARA SAEDI (2018).
KNOPF BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

*Reviewed by Danielle M. Butcher, Ed.S
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge,
Louisiana*

About the Author

Irani-born Sara Saedi is a YA writer of both novels and television. A former creative executive for ABC Daytime, Saedi earned a B.A. in Film and Mass Communications from the University of California and has written three TV movies for ABC Family, won a Daytime Emmy for her ABC web series *What If ...*, and worked as a staff writer on the FOX sitcom *The Goodwin Games*. She is the author of the YA series *Never Ever* and the coming-of-age memoir *Americanized: Rebel Without a Green Card*.

About the Book

Saedi's memoir *Americanized: Rebel Without a Green Card* documents her life as an Irani immigrant to the United States, straddling the divide between the culture of her early childhood homeland and her life as an American adolescent. Like any coming-of-age novel, Saedi's memoir explores teenage rebellion, crushes, changing bodies, family relationships, loss of loved ones, feelings of insecurity, the desire to belong, and finding one's place in the world. However, Saedi's memoir is set apart by its exploration of the immigrant experience, a concept which natural-born American citizens can little comprehend but which Saedi describes with humorous candor. The memoir's introduction establishes the thematic juxtaposition of typical American teen problems with the "looming fear of deportation" of undocumented immigrants which appears throughout the book. Each chapter explores a memorable—and very relatable—aspect of Saedi's Americanized adolescence through the lenses of her immigrant status and her Irani culture. In addition to scenes from her life, Saedi intersperses her book with actual diary entries from her youth, several standalone Frequently Asked Questions about Irani culture, and an "Undocumented Immigrant Refresher Course" which explains immigration terminology in the context of her family's path to citizenship. In reading this memoir, U.S. teens can discover how much they have in common with immigrant teens while also realizing the complexity of the immigration process. Saedi's family arrived in the U.S. on visitors' visas, filing for political asylum and adjustment of status, but due to extensive bureaucratic red tape, they remained "undocumented immigrants" for the next twenty years. The situation being beyond their control, the Saedis lived in

constant anxiety of deportation, yet they sought to live as normal a life as possible in their adopted country.

Americanized: Rebel Without a Green Card offers meaningful insight into the life of a teenaged undocumented immigrant. In depicting her family as good people with strong family values and an “insane work ethic,” Saedi gives her readers names and faces to represent the millions of unauthorized immigrants residing in the United States. However, much of the content would be unsuitable for younger adolescent readers. Parents might object to the frequent use of adult language and references to underage drinking, sex, masturbation, drug use, and rebellious behavior. Saedi also brings her political and religious leanings to the forefront in several places—shining a negative light on conservatives as well as Christian, Muslim, and overly religious people. I recommend teachers who use this book in their curriculum to present it as an opportunity for older students to view the world through someone else’s perspective and to engage in positive, critical discussions about how their worldviews align with and differ from the author’s.

Reviewer Danielle M. Butcher, Ed.S. is a doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University. She specializes in literacy with an emphasis on ESL, and her current research interests include the growing English learner population in the state of Louisiana, high school teacher ESL training, and the impact of cultural biases on ESL education.