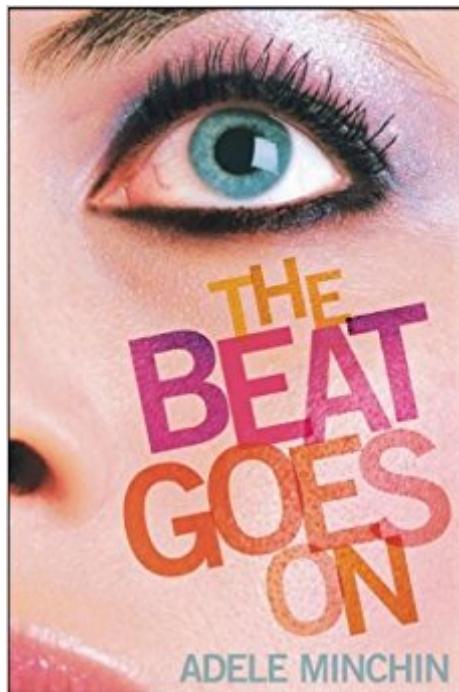


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# The Beat Goes On



## **Synopsis**

People don't want to talk about it. they're scared they might catch it....nobody realizes that there are people like emma out there who have just had a bit of bad luck from one careless mistake. From The Beat Goes On At fifteen shy Leyla looks up to her sixteen-year-old cousin, Emma. Beautiful, confident, and popular with boys, Emma seems to have it all. But when Emma learns that she's HIV positive after having unprotected sex just once, Leyla must be the strong one. Supporting her cousin through all the changes, even teaching music to kids in Emma's support group, Leyla promises to keep it all a secret. But when Leyla's gorgeous new boyfriend thinks condoms are optional, and Emma's health begins to decline, Leyla realizes people will never be safe unless they are aware. Will she find the courage to speak out and make people understand?

## **Book Information**

Age Range: 12 and up

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Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

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## **Customer Reviews**

Grade 7 Up--Leyla, 15, an aspiring drummer, wishes for a "really good drama" to spice up her life in the Manchester, England suburbs. She gets far more than she bargained for when her beloved cousin Emma, 16, is diagnosed with HIV, and Emma swears Leyla to uncomfortable secrecy. She begins to spend covert Saturdays by giving drumming lessons at an HIV outreach center to support Emma. When her parents find out through neighborhood gossip, they forbid her to go near "those people" again. The teen is upset but not surprised at her parents' attitudes; she is mortified at the response to her pleas for an AIDS-education program at school. Leyla's observations are thoughtful,

witty, and levelheaded, and her heart and self-effacing heroism carry the book. No Pollyanna, however, she disobeys her parents, doesn't apologize for her sexuality, and soundly whoops a trash-talking classmate. The relationship between Leyla and Emma is richly drawn, with just enough uniquely British sarcasm underlying their mutual regard, love, and trust. Occasionally, the dialogue reads like the script for a public-service announcement, but only when Leyla rants about the ignorance of her parents and peers in conversation. Minchin's deft and cinematic plotting distinguishes this from a simple problem novel, though, as events and their consequences continue to build, inform, and surprise. The fast-paced plot, along with clear, sharp, and mostly unsentimental language, makes this a solid addition to the subject's heavily nonfiction canon, and an especially good starting point for reluctant readers. Leyla's believable earnestness and burgeoning activism show enough about the inescapably unsubtle subject matter to forgive Minchin her sometimes heavy-handed telling.--Johanna Lewis, New York Public Library Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 8-11. Fifteen-year-old Leyla must keep her cousin's secret: Emma is HIV positive, and only her mother and Leyla know. The secret becomes a burden, especially when Leyla must lie to her parents in order to work with Emma's support group on their special project--to teach other HIV-positive teens how to play the drums. In spite of its heavy Criticisms and a didactic tone, this is one of the better YA books about HIV. The facts of transmission and symptoms are clearly presented, as are Emma's struggles to lead a normal, healthy life. Leyla's very proper mother's holier-than-thou response and the grief Emma and her mother feel are authentic and painful. Leyla's sadness and initial unease at being physically near her cousin are also palpably genuine. Minchin educates young readers while telling a gripping story that will keep personal tragedy aficionados turning the pages to the hopeful yet realistic conclusion. Frances BradburnCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Fifteen-year-old Leyla begins to see HIV in a new way when she learns that her sixteen-year-old cousin, Emma, is infected. The Beat Goes On deals with an important subject: Teens need to know that it isn't just "those people" who get HIV. It can affect anyone and even with modern medications, there is no escaping the impact on your life. The book portrays stigma in the UK and the loneliness of having something so overwhelming going on in your life that you can't talk about. It shows a teen standing against the tide to reach out to others who aren't all that different from her. I was moved by the ending and hint of resolution of family relationships. The setting is English--probably too English

for most American readers with its contemporary British slang. I was frustrated by the slow pace produced by a first person narrator that too often told us about the people and events (for 7 pages at the beginning!) rather than using scene to let us experience the story along with the characters. The editor in me wanted to cut the places where dialog sounded designed to convey the information in the pamphlets the girls were reading, rather than reflect the way teens would actually talk. The author could have added to the impact by showing what happened to the girl who got tested at the same time, but never went to find out the results, and the boy who had infected Emma. The book assumes that sexual activity is a normal part of a healthy relationship even for fifteen-year-olds, and the message to condomize is as loud as that to not stigmatize.

Read this years ago. Very good book.

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