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## Bartels' "The words between us" (book review)

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# Book Reviews

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Bartels, E. (2019). *The words between us*. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell. 358 pp. \$15.99. ISBN 9781800734923

Robin Windsor tries to conceal her family past, both in the present as a bookstore owner, and in the past as a high school student. In high school, she began a relationship with Peter Flynt, one that grew out of love for books. Now, on the day her father is to be executed for his crimes, Robin receives in the mail the first book she and Peter had shared. What criminal activities were Robin's parents involved with? What had driven a wedge between Robin and Peter? Why was Peter reaching out to Robin? How has Robin's family history shaped her past? How will it shape her future? Through a storyline alternating between the present and 2000/2001, Bartels invites us to learn more of Robin's journey of seeking the truth about her past and how it affects her present.

Bartels engages the reader's imagination through her depiction of River City (a fictional city in Michigan) and through the interactions of the characters. The reader can see the gestures of each character as they converse, as well as the beauty of the book's settings. One envisions the subtleties of conversation as the characters reveal and conceal information about their lives. The interplay between what the characters choose to reveal about themselves and hide from each other points to real-life human interaction.

Readers in their mid-20s or older are more likely to have an appreciation of this book. Additionally, readers who seek a story driven by a growing understanding of a character's development will appreciate *The Words Between Us*. Those familiar with classics such as *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Jane Eyre*, and *The Handmaid's Tale* will have a greater appreciation of Robin and Peter's relationship, as well as Robin's perspective on life. The writing style of this contemporary fiction book has been influenced by that of the classics.

A predominant theme of this book is coming to terms with the past so one can accept it and move on toward the future. Robin's challenge is facing her perceptions of how others have acted and figuring out how to forgive and see the possibilities for new life.

## Reviewer

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