



## The Dark Light

*Mette Newth*

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## **The Dark Light** Mette Newth

When it was discovered that thirteen-year-old Tora has leprosy, she is sent from her family's remote mountain farm to the leprosy hospital in the bustling port of Bergen. In early-nineteenth-century Norway, lepers are quarantined in this hospital and no longer considered among the living. But even as her body gradually fails her, Tora's new life blossoms. She finds strength through helping her fellow patients, both young and old, and she decides to see for herself what the Bible says about leprosy. To do so, she must make friends with the young and angry Mistress Dybendal, the only person at the hospital who can teach her to read.

As she did in "The Abduction" (an ALA Best Book for Young Adults and a "School Library Journal" Best Book of the Year), Mette Newth brings another era vividly to life and demonstrates the timeless nature of the search for identity and tolerance.

## **The Dark Light Details**

Date : Published April 2nd 2004 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux (first published 1995)

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Author : Mette Newth

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## From Reader Review The Dark Light for online ebook

### **Kendra says**

I absolutely love this book. It is stunning and beautifully written and I plan on finding and reading every single book that Sunniva mentioned in the entire thing. There are so many excellent quotes in this book, but I don't want to spoil anything for potential readers. Actually, I am surprised that this many people have read this book at all (in a totally good way of course). I highly recommend it unless you cannot handle gruesome descriptions with incredible detail, especially to one who sees the stories of books like watching a movie but with the added benefit of thoughts and emotions.

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### **Miss Amanda says**

gr 9+ 244pgs

1800s, Norway. 13 year old Tora is the living dead. Tora has leprosy and is sent from her rural farming community to the leprosy hospital in Bergen. At first fearful of the other patients, Tora learns to accept her fate and even finds "light" in the darkness that surrounds her.

A bit gruesome in some parts (definitely grade 9+), but it was interesting to watch as Tora gradually became a leader in their community.

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### **Morgan Medina says**

Mette Newth's "The Dark Light" is an amazing book. It's main focus is on a young girl, Tora, who has leprosy and takes place in St. Jorgen's Hospital in Norway, although, it often flashes back to her life back at home. She is the youngest of her brothers and sisters and had become best friends with the neighboring farm's youngest boy. They become very close due to their bossy older siblings. At the hospital Tora focuses on helping other leprosy ridden patients and grows to wonder what the bible says about her condition. To do so, she must befriend the mean and angry Mistress Dybendal, the only person in the hospital who can read.

Also, this book was translated from Norwegian so there are a few mistakes but they are easily understandable.

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### **Gigi says**

Because I have so much compassion, this book left me with a heavy heart.

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### **Michelle White says**

This book would be good for student's to read. I think they would enjoy it. I could barely put it down. I had

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never read a book on leprosy, let alone from the point of view of a child. I got it from the IUS Library.

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### **Kirsten says**

A beautifully bittersweet book of light, dark and ultimately unfailing book that deserves a lot more recognition than it gets.

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### **Kris says**

A moving story about an unusual time, place and situation. In early 19th-century Norway, a young girl, Tora, is discovered to have leprosy. She is confined to a leprosy "hospital" although there is no treatment for leprosy. In trying to find some meaning in her disease, she befriends another patient, the wealthy and angry Mistress Dybendal, in order to learn to read and find answers. The answers she finds are spiritual, although not necessarily religious. Recommended for gr. 7-12.

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### **Mell says**

Sad historical fiction about a girl with leprosy.

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### **Reetta Saine says**

Tämä kirja kulkee aika hyvin ilman nostoakin, mutta sopii hyvin vinkkauksiin. Leprasairaalaan saapuva nuori tyttö käy läpi elämäänsä, pohtii kuolemaa, näkee kipua ja sairautta, uppoaa uskontoon ja toisten auttamiseen ja löytää lopulta helpotusta ystäväyydestä, kirjallisuudesta ja kuolemasta.

Romaani pohjautuu tositapahtumiin Bergenin historiassa, ja pienellä vaivalla tähän saa yhdistettyä kotimaisen Seilin saaren. Surua ja kauneutta ja iloakin.

Ehdoton suositus.

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### **Trevor says**

I dunno why, but I love PLAGUE / PESTILENCE books -- this is a really graphic and accurate account of life in a danish leper colony.

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### **Chloe Faulkner says**

It is not often that I read a book that touches me quite like The Dark Light did. I didn't want to finish it on the bus because I felt I really needed to sit down in a comfortable spot and give myself the peace to finish one of

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the most amazing books I have ever read. This book questions God, religion, our treatment of others, life, death etc.

In one word this book is just perfect.

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### **Christa says**

saddest book i ever read. i cried at the end and found hope through it as well. the way this book is translated, the prose...so beautiful. there are many quotes in here that mean so much to me.

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### **Oliver McMahon says**

The approach of this book is completely unlike anything I ever read, and hooked me from the first page due to a personal fascination with death that surpasses a majority of the people I've known -- it's a compulsive and haunting thought for me and, for Tora Tveiten, it is a promise that she must face at the tender age of thirteen-years-old.

There is no ultimate conflict. There is no 'enemy to overcome'. There is only the diagnosis of leprosy and the toll of the death bell in the back of the mind of every soul sent to Bergen to die, unknown. When I first realized this, I nearly balked, wondering where hope or happiness could be found in a book so dreary and cruelly honest about the nature of disease, the things that we as living beings shy away from on instinct. Yet above all else, there did rise a true hero: Compassion.

On a technical level, the book was lovely. Well-written and easily graspable without demanding the reader have a large vocabulary. The character dialogue occasionally lacked distinctive voices, likely due to the translation from Norwegian to English. My favourite literary choice of the author involved the way that no details were given for the sole sake of exposition -- each detail came in its own time with no pushing or shoving. While the story's resolution initially took a bit to understand, the circuitous choice on behalf of the author was spot-on, leading to a satisfying ending that could not have been more poignant.

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### **Meg says**

Although it was written first, this book will remind a lot of people of Moloka'i, because the subject is so similar. The setting, the writing, and the nuances are all very different, and although the plot has understandable similarities, it is a very different book.

Even in translation, Newth's writing is rich and lyrical. Her characters are honest and realistic, and the book addresses some very interesting questions.

Unlike a lot of contemporary YA, this is not a plot-driven novel. It wanders at its own pace, asking questions and exploring the answers. Although the book is not fast paced, it is still engaging.

My reaction followed a similar course, and I spent a few days mulling things over and discussing it with

others before I sat down to rate it and write my review. The longer I thought about it, and the more I talked about it, the more I found I liked it. This had a lot to do with the ending:

(view spoiler)

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**Danielle Perales says**

Cast out, trapped. Tora brings light into her fellow lepers lives. Now there is reason to live.

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