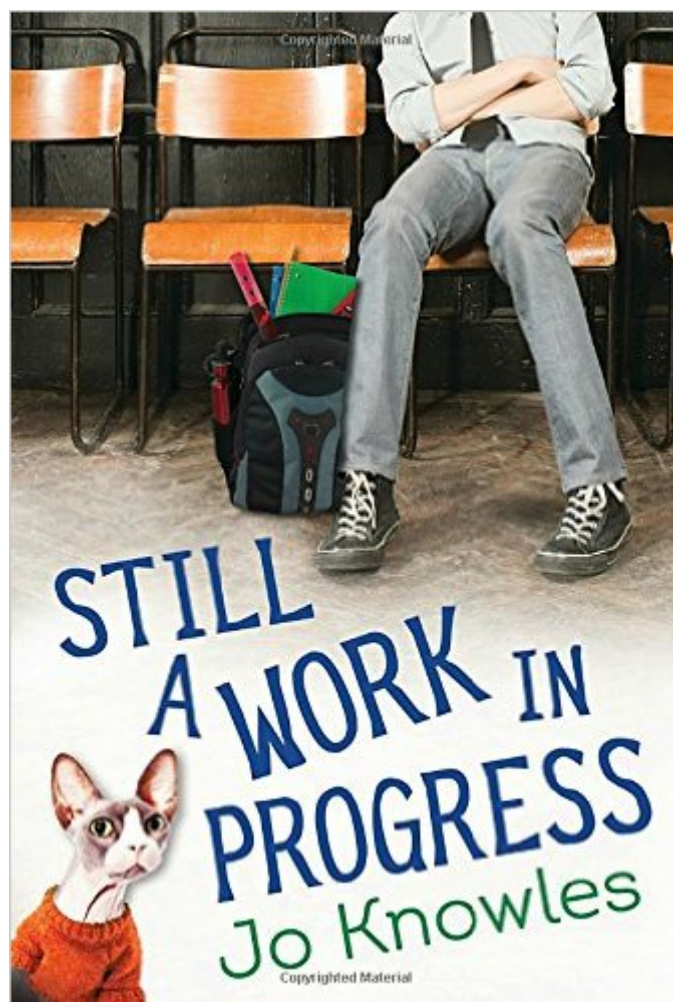


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# Still A Work In Progress



## Synopsis

In a return to middle-grade fiction, master of perspectives Jo Knowles depicts a younger sibling struggling to maintain his everyday life while coping with his sister's secret struggle. Noah is just trying to make it through seventh grade. The girls are confusing, the homework is boring, and even his friends are starting to bug him. Not to mention that his older sister, Emma, has been acting pretty strange, even though Noah thought she'd been doing better ever since the Thing They Don't Talk About. The only place he really feels at peace is in art class, with a block of clay in his hands. As it becomes clear through Emma's ever-stricter food rules and regulations that she's not really doing better at all, the normal seventh-grade year Noah was hoping for begins to seem pretty unattainable. In an affecting and realistic novel with bright spots of humor, Jo Knowles captures the complexities of navigating middle school while feeling helpless in the face of a family crisis.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Candlewick (August 2, 2016)

Language: English

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ISBN-13: 978-0763672171

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviewsÂ (14 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #51,959 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #47 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Illness #74 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Health > Diseases #151 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Fiction

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

## Customer Reviews

Still A Work In ProgressBy: Jo KnowlesI received a free ARC of this book in exchange for my honest opinion.As a middle school teacher, I read lots of YA and children's books. If it's a good story, it will appeal to adults as well as young people. This is simply a tremendous book dealing with an important issue in a non-compromising way.Plot:The plot synopsis online states that this story is

about a middle-school student (Noah) struggling to live a normal life while dealing with his "sister's secret struggle". Say that three times fast! The publishers don't state what the problem is but from the first chapter of the book, the situation is very clear to the reader. In fact, the Publisher's Weekly review (on the site) clearly states that this book deals with eating disorders. I'm not sure why they are cloaking this in mystery because this part was not suspenseful. What did leave me ragged and wrung out emotionally was the tension created slowly over the course of this book as our main character deals with his sister's (Emma's) disease. At the beginning of the book we see Noah and his family just dealing with regular situations. By the climax, his mind and emotions are entirely consumed by Emma and her inexplicable and demanding disease. Emma's eating disorder is mirrored even in the family's eating habits at home while Emma is away at therapy. Noah slowly finds himself distanced from his friends and their everyday problems. When he finally explodes at school, it is a relief. I love how Noah's mom explains things, "They're behaving like normal people. It's just that our life right now isn't in sync with anyone else's." (Page 263).

Vermont is privileged to have many incredible authors scattered through its hills and mountains, and nestled in the small town of Hartland is Jo Knowles, author of young adult books that touch hearts, bring tears and laughter, help us to realize there are others going through problems that we may be facing, and just plain make you think more about what others are going through. I was privileged to be part of Jo's Still a Work In Progress ARC tour, and to be honest, when the book came (two weeks before the end of school) I thought, "Oh crud! I'm never going to be able to find time to read this book this week or next, maybe I should just send it on to the next person," but I decided to give myself a chance and am so glad I did. My nights went longer, and every extra minute of every day found me picking up the book and reading on a bit more—waiting at the doctor's office—while a student was finishing a test—during silent sustained reading (time I usually take for conferencing with students, I cheated for two days and read for myself)—even in the car, which usually makes me sick. I just had to get through, not because of the timeline, but because Jo had created characters that I really cared about and wanted to see whether things were going to work out for them. The book is narrated by Noah, a 7th grade boy in a rather small school. The school is so small that everyone knows each other and wandering from classroom to classroom is a hairless cat named Curly who seems to have a personality of his own. His two best friends are Sam and Ryan, and as most boys this age, they have begun to take an interest in girls.

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