

Review

ANN HELEN KOLÅS INGEBRIGTSEN: *ANGER (SINNE)*

Despite some semi-hysterical intrigues, an essential book about ADHD

Emotional Life

Synne is nearly 15. She is so hot-tempered that her classmates call her Sinne ('angry' in Norwegian). Hence the title of the book. But they don't know that she's like this because she has ADHD. We meet Synne over the course of a few days when she must decide whether or not to start taking medication again to improve her concentration.

At the same time, we gain an insight into what it's like to live with ADHD.

This is probably the book's most important function. People who have this diagnosis themselves will have a point of identification – a character who reflects their experiences. Meanwhile other readers, by becoming close to the protagonist, will be drawn into these experiences in a way that is only possible through literature.

To avoid an overly pedagogic approach, Ann Helen Kolås Ingebrigtsen has placed her protagonist in a situation involving high levels of intrigue – rivalry over a best friend, jealousy over the new boy in the class, divorced parents. And then, at the centre, the protagonist with her restless heart, who stirs up so many conflicts and disturbances that her best friend sees her, somewhat resignedly, as a drama queen desperate for attention.

The text, in Neo-Norwegian, is peppered with English in a way that seems natural for the age group. But it doesn't feel intrusive – or like an attempt to talk kids' language. The same thing applies to mobile phones, which play a large role but aren't linked to jargon or fashions that would leave the book dated – and outdated – in half a year.

The intrigues, especially those involving a party and an Instagram photo that appears to depict a steamy embrace with the wrong boy, are borderline hysterical of course. But that's in keeping with the secondary school age group. And it works. It will probably be right on target for many readers who are the same age as the main character or a couple of years younger.

Of course, adult readers may well find themselves shifting uneasily in their seat a couple of times as they read, and will note that the many depictions of teachers and lessons bear witness to the author's day job. But I am absolutely certain that this book will be a crucial source of support for secondary school pupils who, like Synne, are trying to come to terms with an emotional life that is unusually hectic even in the context of puberty.

