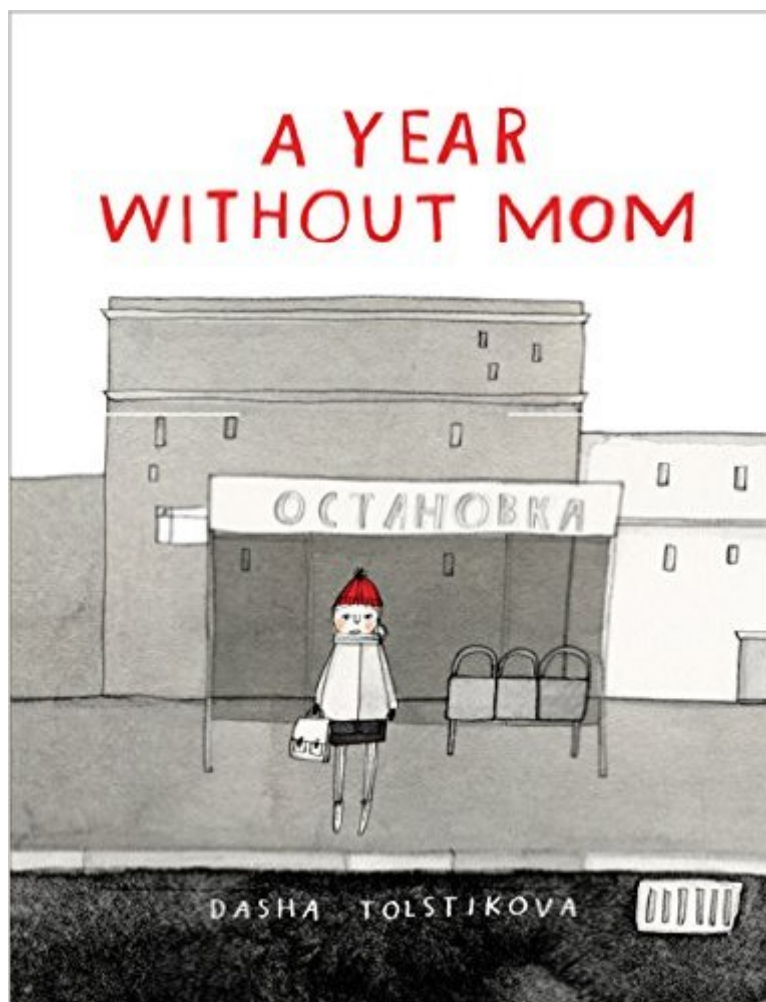


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# A Year Without Mom



## Synopsis

A Year Without Mom follows 12-year-old Dasha through a year full of turmoil after her mother leaves for America. It is the early 1990s in Moscow, and political change is in the air. But Dasha is more worried about her own challenges as she negotiates family, friendships and school without her mother. Just as she begins to find her own feet, she gets word that she is to join her mother in America—a place that seems impossibly far from everything and everyone she loves. This gorgeous and subtly illustrated graphic novel signals the emergence of Dasha Tolstikova as a major new talent.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 690 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 176 pages

Publisher: Groundwood Books (October 6, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1554986923

ISBN-13: 978-1554986927

Product Dimensions: 6.6 x 0.7 x 8.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars— See all reviews (3 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #354,642 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #37 in Books > Children's Books > Comics & Graphic Novels > Biographies #173 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Europe #259 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Europe

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 4 - 9

## Customer Reviews

A Year Without Mom is absolute perfection. Every word, so carefully chosen, is like having Dasha Tolstikova sit across from you, telling her story, holding your hand, cutting deep into your heart. In the best way, I mean. The text is extraordinary, crafted in a way that conveys the emotional depth of the story right to your soul. You feel everything 12-year-old Dasha feels. This is no easy feat: To be able to write such an accessible story that carries such huge big emotion. The illustrations carry the text perfectly. Tolstikova's style captures Moscow and adolescence like no one else's ever could. Amazingly perfect. Let's talk about pacing. You could teach a class on the pacing and page turns

and white space in this book. It's part of what makes it seem like Tolstikova herself is telling the story into your ear, and is a master class in how to vary the speed of a story, and when, and why. The pacing carries you through, tells you when to speed up and when to slow down, takes your hand on this ride. Brilliant. I will not be the first person to say this, but: the genius thing about *A Year Without Mom* is that the trials 12-year-old Dasha goes through are common, and ones that we all can relate to. Friendships, crushes, family, trying to find our way, and going through life from places where you feel content and places where you do not. What makes this book extraordinary, and extraordinarily interesting, is the history and the setting. Astoundingly excellent. Highly highly HIGHLY recommended, for everyone who likes books.

Summary: 12-year-old Dasha is crushed when she learns that her mother is spending a year at the University of Illinois, leaving Dasha with her grandparents in the Soviet Union. Her father is living in Los Angeles, so Dasha feels lonely, although her grandparents are loving and she has two best friends. During the year, she goes through some friendship difficulties, develops an unrequited crush on an older boy, and works hard to get into a better school. Meanwhile, political unrest results in a few anxious days as Boris Yeltsin replaces Mikhail Gorbachev as the Soviet leader. Things are beginning to fall into place by the spring, when her mother returns, announcing that Dasha will be joining her for the second year of her master's program. The book ends on an uncertain note, as Dasha arrives in Urbana, Illinois, and meets a girl who just might be a new friend. 168 pages; grades 5-8. Pros: Even though she is from a different place and time, Dasha's feelings will be familiar to 21st century American tweens. A cross between a graphic novel and an illustrated chapter book, *A Year Without Mom* will appeal to both reluctant and avid middle school readers.

Great story about coming of age, changes, and how similar life can be over a span of many years. Relatable to many kiddos-especially those dealing with unexpected change.

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