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The Misfits



Synopsis

Sticks and stones may break our bones, but names will break our spirit.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What do a 12-year-old student who moonlights as a tie salesman, a tall, outspoken girl, a gay middle schooler and a kid branded as a hooligan have in common? Best friends for years, they've all been the target of cruel name-calling and now that they're in seventh grade, they're not about to take it any more. In this hilarious and poignant novel, Howe (Bunnicula; The Watcher) focuses on the quietest of the bunch, overweight Bobby Goodspeed (the tie salesman), showing how he evolves from nerd to hero when he starts speaking his mind. Addie (the outspoken girl) decides that the four of them should run against more popular peers in the upcoming student council election. But her lofty ideals and rabble-rousing speeches make the wrong kind of waves, offending fellow classmates, teachers and the principal. It is not until softer-spoken Bobby says what's in his heart about nicknames and taunts that people begin to listen and take notice, granting their respect for the boy they used to call "Lardo" and "Fluff." The four "misfits" are slightly larger than life wiser than their years, worldlier than the smalltown setting would suggest, and remarkably well-adjusted but there remains much authenticity in the story's message about preadolescent stereotyping and the devastating effects of degrading labels. An upbeat, reassuring novel that encourages preteens and teens to celebrate their individuality. Ages 10-14. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 4-8-A high spirited cast brings James Howe's energetic, sometimes hilarious book (Atheneum, 2001) about junior high school politics and nasty name calling to life. Young actor Spencer Murphy does an excellent job playing narrator Bobby Goodspeed, an overweight seventh grader who belongs to the Gang of Five, which (ironically) is made up of four not five kids who consider themselves misfits. The other "gang" members are the precocious and extremely tall Addie (played with effective Lisa Simpson-esque moral outrage by Maggie Lane), the Elvis look-alike Skeezie (the funny Andrew Pollack), and the effeminate Joe (a sensitive performance by Ryan Carlesco). The student council elections are coming up, and these students decide to run on the "No-Name Party," which promises to bring an end to all name calling in the school. The scene with the characters listing the various hateful names they have been called (everything from "fat boy" to "fairy" to "greaser" to "loser") is truly chilling. Thanks to Daniel Bostick's inventive direction of the actors, the presentation soars and entertains. There are many clever touches: an echo effect is used when Bobby has interior thoughts, and there are neat sound effects when characters speak on television or over PA systems. A clever music score, which mixes rockabilly with muzak, adds to the story's humor and energy. The entire cast, especially the aforementioned young actors as well as Bill Molesky as Bobby's world weary boss, does a fine job. An interesting interview with James Howe completes this first rate presentation. Brian E. Wilson, Evanston Public Library, IL Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As a middle school English teacher, I am always on the hunt for books with great stories that can also provide fantastic conversation starters in the classroom. I had heard of this book and decided to give it a try. I was floored and found myself unable to put it down. Not only is this book laugh out loud funny, with several unpredictably poignant parts that had me near tears, but it explores issues to which middle school students of all backgrounds can relate. I teach in a school where, thankfully, there is not a great deal of "visible" bullying. Even so, there is no doubt that even in the most "refined" of communities, people are alienated, left out, and called names. "The Misfits" hits this nail right on the head -- the fact that people often do not recognize name-calling and alienation as bullying and the fact that it is not long before those who are being called names begin to internalize those words and accept them as defining who they are. Read this book. Read it with your twelve year old, read it for yourself. Remember that your words can make or break a person's day and that the scars of hurtful language are always the last to fade.

I read this book as part of a reading and mentoring program with a local middle school. Having not read young adult lit since I WAS a young adult, I wasn't sure what to expect. But this book was excellent! James Howe was one of my favorite writers when I was an elementary and middle school student and his writing has only gotten better with age. He's clever and funny but somehow manages to get to the guts of how kids are feeling, why they behave in certain ways, and why they think we (big people) are just a little crazy. He doesn't treat them like adorable little idiots but gives them real problems, complex relationships and chooses lots of words they may not know--but will feel compelled to look up. His narrator's voice is true and his development throughout the book is believable and heartwarming without being sickly. The story feels genuine, the conflicts (I imagine) are the conflicts of the modern teen. This, of course, means that if you as a parent and don't want your kids to think there are race issues or that fat kids get teased or that "the gays" are at large at your child's school--don't let them read this book. On the flip side, if you want to let your kid know that you want to share in the goods and the bads of his or her school experience and, indeed, if you want to prepare yourself for the perils and victories of school in 2009, not only let your teen read this book but read it yourself as well. Thumbs up, James Howe.

This is a splendid book about friendship, values, and navigating the shoals of middle school life. Beautiful characters. This audio book from Full Cast Audio is a delight....real kids reading their parts with skill. Highly recommended.

Bought this book for my nephew and I went to read it before he did but couldn't make it past the third page. The sentences are paragraphs long so it makes for a very confusing awkward read. The book did arrive in perfect condition though, and the subject matter is good so I gave it 3 stars.

Do NOT use for middle grades unless you want an example for them to see how to NOT write a book. So many stereotypes portrayed and invalidation of minorities that it failed to get the point of "no bullying" across. Save yourself time and money!!!

I chose ALL five stars because it was the best book ever. I loved the humor. The only let down was that the first two chapters were a little confusing, like how did a twelve year old get a job as a TIE SALESMEN?! But anyway It was still an awesome book. I would recommend this to anyone.

I couldn't put it down.

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