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Nothing's Fair In Fifth Grade



Synopsis

A fifth grade class, repelled by the overweight new student who has serious home problems, finally learns to accept her.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 600 (What's this?)

Paperback: 144 pages

Publisher: Puffin Books; First Edition edition (September 11, 2008)

Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.4 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 0.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (114 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #11,350 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Health > Weight #60 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Social Skills #205 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > School

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

I have read so many books in my life that I sometimes feel that I have warped my sense of reality. But of all the books I have ever read, and that has to be at least thousands, this is the book I have read the most. I am 21 now, I have been reading in since I was in third grade. But I don't just read it, or remember it as some cheezy book from when I was a kid. Barthe DeClements was a school psychologist for many years, and that comes through in her writing. There's not a character in this book that rings false, I could picture each one of them as someone I knew. All these years later, the story is so familiar to me that I should be tired of it. But I am not. This really is a classic for kids, because everyone dislikes and them relates to Elsie. Elsie, of course, goes on to become the heroine of two more of DeClements novels, "How Do You Lose Those Ninth Grade Blues" and "Seventeen And In-Between". These are also rich novels, and they bring a happy end to characters we've loved forever. But I know everyone else wants another sequel! Start with this incomparable work, and then get to know the rest of DeClements fiction. You'll never forget it, trust me.

I was first exposed to the work of Barthe DeClements in my FOURTH-grade year - 1989. During story time, my teacher read this book to us, and I immediately fell in love with it. Some may compare this to Judy Blume's "Blubber," as both are about fifth-graders, both feature girls who are singled out for teasing and torment due to being overweight, and both the narrator and the object of torment are presented - initially at least - as unsympathetic characters (Elsie because she steals from her classmates and panhandles for forbidden sweets during lunch, Jenifer because of her initial hate of Elsie before she begins to understand Elsie's life situation). However, this book seems to have more heart and certainly has a more satisfying conclusion than "Blubber." In "Blubber" (which I still enjoy) Judy Blume never characterizes Linda "Blubber" Fischer as anything more than a chubby pushover without a backbone. In "NFIFG," we come to understand why Elsie is the way she is - she comes from a broken home, she's been abandoned by her father (at least it seems so), she has a verbally and physically abusive mother who very likely has some psychological issues of her own, and she eats for comfort. (In that respect the book, published in 1981, may be seen as ahead of its time, being written at a time when the psychology behind obesity was not as widely discussed in the public sphere as it is today.) At the same time, her stealing is not condoned and she is made to face the consequences for her actions. One other reviewer thought the book was an example of fat-shaming. I can't disagree more. Elsie's suffering doesn't end when she begins to lose weight, because she still has a less-than-ideal home life to contend with, including a mother who is so neglectful and abusive toward her that she won't even buy her new clothes when the old clothes no longer fit (until a classmate's mother shames her into doing so). Jenifer becomes Elsie's friend not because of Elsie's weight loss, but because she comes to understand Elsie's life situation better and to realize that Elsie is a human being with real feelings. Eventually she is able to bring Sharon and Diane around to do the same. And despite her weight loss, Elsie is still a target for bullies and name-calling. There is a sequel, HOW DO YOU LOSE THOSE NINTH GRADE BLUES?, published in 1983, which continues the story of Elsie into high school, and even though she has slimmed down into a svelte beauty by then, the weight loss hasn't solved all of her problems, as she still suffers from insecurity and her relationship with her mother is still strained. Nowhere do I see a message along the lines of MAGGIE GOES ON A DIET (i.e. that losing weight will magically make you popular and solve all of your problems). As for the narrator, "Blubber"'s Jill Brenner is a spoiled brat and a jerk essentially throughout the entire book, and never grows or matures in any way - the lesson she learns is about standing up for herself, not about treating others with respect, and she never feels any remorse for the torment she caused Linda, even after she herself is on the receiving

end of the teasing. In "NFIFG," Jenifer's coming to know Elsie as more than just "the fat girl" - as a human being with real emotions who is mired in a very tough time in her life - seems somewhat cliché and "After School Special"-like at first, but it has better lessons for readers than "Blubber." Jenifer is simply much more likeable than Jill. Since this was published over 30 years ago, a number of the cultural references are obviously dated - for example, MORK AND MINDY, and when was the last time 10/11-year-old girls listened to Elton John, the Bee Gees, and the Rolling Stones? - but the lessons about not judging a person until you understand his or her life situation, and about looking past a person's attractive (or unattractive) exterior to see the person inside, still hold true. For more of Elsie, read the sequel HOW DO YOU LOSE THOSE NINTH GRADE BLUES?, which gives much more insight into Elsie's unhappy home life and frosty relationship with her mother. Also recommended is 1985's SIXTH GRADE CAN REALLY KILL YOU, which introduces a new character, Helen (who hides her own feelings of inadequacy due to her reading disability through juvenile delinquency) and brings back Jenifer, Elsie, Diane and the rest for supporting roles.

Barthe DeClements has created the most wonderful book for fifth-graders to read. Kids of all ages and grades would appreciate it as well, but I imagine that it is a target for most fifth-graders. There is humor, for sure. Cracks about Elsie Edwards' weight, such as when she's walking with Jenny, Diane, and Sharon, some sixth-grade boys say the bunch is "three flagpoles and a beach ball" and "three asparagus strings and a tomato". Elsie at first has no friends, and is disliked by everyone for stealing lunch money and scrounging at lunch time. But Jenny befriends her, and convinces Diane and Sharon to give her a chance as well. This is a read full of friendship, the real world, and fifth grade. And I declare one thing about the author of this book: Barthe DeClements is a genius!

Is nothing fair for you in fifth grade? If so, the book Nothing's Fair in Fifth Grade is the perfect book for you to read. Another reason to read the book is because it is full of friendship, so for all of you who like friendship books, this is for you. The story is focused on the life of Elsie Edwards, who goes to a new school and is not welcome there. Elsie is an overweight girl, who is on a diet, but still asks people for food. One day, she starts stealing money, and when the teacher and the principal find out, the classroom door has to be locked. Jennifer, and Diane, are two girls in her class who don't like her. A little later in the book, Jennifer and Diane... Find out when you read the book! I would recommend this book to fourth and fifth graders, because it tells people about being friends, and relates to real life. The reason I really likes this book is because I liked the technique that the author used (of really explaining the characters feelings), and also, I could relate it to one of my friends' life.

I read this book in the end of fourth grade, and I knew I was ready to help new people fit in in fifth grade. For all the people who don't like to read, THIS IS FOR YOU!

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