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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

Known best for his Bannicula series, James Howe breaks out from that mold and ventures forth with one of the best books written this year, "The Misfits". Both touching, cutting edge, real and gutsy, the Misfits in the title are a band of four friends, each one with a trait that society unfairly and immediately judges them on: being too tall, too fat, too gay, too greasy, and all of them too smart for their peers.. :) The kids band together for survival, security, and to experience something they all yearn for: acceptance. The story, compelled by the characters needs, is about a schoolwide election, and how the students are forced to join the Democrats or Republicans. Of course, they don't quite fit in either group, and decide to form their own party: initially "the Freedom Party" and then, more appropriately, "The No-Name Party". What follows is stunning, inspirational, heartbreaking, and guaranteed to provoke thought. The story is written in a very interesting way. Partially prose, partially "minutes" which read like a play, it moves the story along to give a true sense of these kids, and they become very real as we hear their voices. One side plot involving a manager of the tie department didn't quite work, but the story more than compensates by offering us middle school intrigue with many twists and turns. How many of us at one time or another that we could fit into that group. It's a shared feeling, and Howe brilliantly captures the agony of not fitting in, and the joy of finding a group to fit in with. After all, isn't that we all want?

The Misfits.. I don't even know where exactly to start. You may think the plot sounds a bit childish, four rejected young kids try to make a name for themselves. A name that's not an insult, for once. But it's actually very mature, told by Bobby Goodspeed, the "fat kid" of Paintbrush Falls. Bobby says that misfits tend to stick together within the hurtful depths of pre-teen pressure. And that's true. Bobby is joined by Skeeze, a rebellious dirty boy; Joe, the openly gay and fashion crazed; and Addie, little miss female-rights-activist. But to others, they don't have names. They're called Greasy, Fairy, Beanpole, and Lardbar. Once a week, our little misfits meet up for "the forum", where they eat and (mostly Addie) discuss how to change things around, so that their peers can see them for what they are on the inside, behind the sexuality, frustration, anger, and over-eating. They can see their inner beauty, compassion, and intelligence. What really matters. It's easy to relate to them. It's also very descriptive, Bobby shares all the details so the picture in your mind has no blank spaces. It's also one of the unique reads I bet you will ever pick up. Remember how I said they're trying to change? Not only socially, but also.. politically. Addie decides to create an independent party in the student council election, complete with some fellow misfits: Addie, Bobby, and a popular (and one of very few that are colored) boy by the name of DuShawn. The battle for president is even harder with the leader of the elections against Addie for her protesting in homeroom. So join the election that will leave Paintbrush Falls (as well as yourself) speechless and permanently changed, forever. The lardbars, fairies, beanpoles, geeks, greasers, know-it-alls, and the others excluded from normality will never be looked at the same way again. It will touch your heart, bring tears to your eyes, and bring laughs to your throat. Maybe someday, because of this book, you can walk down a hallway at school and be immune and deaf to the labels and terms that divide the class.

I read The Misfits just last month, and I can't stop raving about it! I love the way that everyone can relate to at least one of the characters in this story. I found it easiest to relate to Bobby, because I am overweight myself, and I get teased a lot about it. Though I am only in 8th grade, I can understand the storyline, and find this incredible book to be a real inspiration to the world. It made me want to take back every name I ever called a kid. James Howe, I think this is your best work yet!!!!

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.

Although this book is a little young for me, I read it on my younger brother's recommendation and was surprised at how good it was. James Howe has written here a humorous, well-voiced, and interesting story. The only problems I found were that the characters, while supposedly twelve, seemed older (maybe 14), and the respective conflicts of the protagonists seemed to tie up a little too neatly at the end. However, I'm willing to forgive a little contrivance for a happy ending, especially when the story entertained me as much as this one did. The Misfits is relatively short (big print: I read it in under three hours just before dinner the other day) but the plot is well-developed. Also, the main character Bobby Goodspeed's voice (as I said) was done well. The book tackles one of the biggest problems faced by (pre)teens, that is, being called names. However, it also deals with the hormones and agonies of that age. I strongly recommend this, mostly to the younger crowd (say, 10-14, which is what the back cover says anyway) but really to anyone looking for a light, funny story about a couple of...well...misfits.

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