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Bluefish



Synopsis

Thirteen-year-old Travis has a secret: he can't read. But a shrewd teacher and a sassy girl are about to change everything in this witty and deeply moving novel. Travis is missing his old home in the country, and he's missing his old hound, Rosco. Now there's just the cramped place he shares with his well-meaning but alcoholic grandpa, a new school, and the dreaded routine of passing when he's called on to read out loud. But that's before Travis meets Mr. McQueen, who doesn't take "pass" for an answer--a rare teacher whose savvy persistence has Travis slowly unlocking a book on the natural world. And it's before Travis is noticed by Velveeta, a girl whose wry banter and colorful scarves belie some hard secrets of her own. With sympathy, humor, and disarming honesty, Pat Schmatz brings to life a cast of utterly believable characters--and captures the moments of trust and connection that make all the difference.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 600L (What's this?)

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 25 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #982,238 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #121 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Drugs](#) #166 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Special Needs](#) #284 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Drugs & Alcohol Abuse](#)

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

A lovely, understated book that celebrates the possibility of a kind and humane friendship between an eighth-grade girl and boy...this novel is also an ode to the significance of reading in the lives of young people and to a teacher who knows the power literature can wield. Unique and original, believable and poignant, this is a book with power of its own. [The Horn Book](#) (starred

review) Readers seeking emotional warmth, congenial humor, and an affirmation of forgiveness and friendship will cozy up to these characters. —•Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books (starred review) Despite the weighty problems the characters face—grief, alcoholism, and bullying among them—Bluefish is a lively, often-humorous, and ultimately hopeful page-turner. It has all the hallmarks of a classic contemporary young adult issues novel. It's packed with memorable and believable characters and powered by the prospect of redemption and just a hint of romance. —•School Library Journal (starred review)

Pat Schmatz is the author of three previous novels for teens. She lives in rural Wisconsin.

Finding one's way in life is hard, especially during the tween years, especially when your best friend is gone and the future looks bleak. In the case of Travis, his dog disappeared and his new school is closing in on him. In the case of Velveeta, her father-figure of a friend just died and her mother is an alcoholic. Travis and Velveeta find each other at the beginning of a new school year, and gravitate towards one another, never getting too close (that feels dangerous) but never traveling far without the other (that feels empty). The story is rich, and full of smiles--although I shed more than a few tears. A great read.

In my opinion this was a great a book. Usually i only read fiction books like the chronicles of vladimir tod or the slayer chronicles. but this book was great. I felt like i can relate to travis alot, because i kinda act like him in school. i'd recomend this book to anyone who can read:)

I had to read this book for a class I am taking on teaching reading with literature. I am glad that I had to read it because it really is a great book. The author keeps her readers wondering about the different relationships in the book and makes it a hard book to put down. I will definitely recommend this book!

Excellent writing! This book kept my interest throughout the story. Good character development and interesting plot. Perfect for teen reading and thoughtful analysis.

Great book, great read for the kids.

OK

Great condition.

After being a teacher for over 25 years, Bluefish has a ring of truth to it. Here are some of those truths:~When teachers put students into groups, no matter how creatively teachers name those groups, it doesn't take students long to know what those groups really mean.~Moving and going to a new school is sometimes scary, sometimes awkward, and sometimes just plain weird.~No one likes change.~Sometimes you find friends when you least expect it.~Not all knowledge comes from books.~Everyone has his or her own set of "strengths".~The grass may seem greener on the other side of the fence, but may not be.~Being a teenager come with its own set of challenges.~Finding someone you can trust in life is important. Travis is a very likeable character. He's in a new town at a new school and learning doesn't come easy for him. It's not because he's not smart, but somewhere along the way reading became challenging for him. Luckily for Travis, he now has Mr. McQueen as a teacher. Mr. McQueen epitomizes what we'd all love in a teacher - a teacher that doesn't give up on a student even when the student has given up on himself. This was my favorite passage in the story, "The lines of ink on the page were a secret code. For the first time Travis wanted to crack it." What an "aha" moment for Travis and what a thrill for his teacher. When Travis meets Valveeta it doesn't seem like a quick friendship would blossom, but Valveeta's wit and sarcastic humor helps this friendship along. It took awhile, but they come to realize they have much more in common than they first thought. Finally, there's Bradley. When Travis helps him on the first day of school without even knowing who he is and without making a scene, it tells us a lot about Travis as a person. Travis also learns that even though Bradley has both his parents, he's very smart, has computer games, a great house, and a seemingly perfect life, Bradley faces challenges of his own. Their world is definitely not perfect, but they teach us that hardships and challenges can be overcome. Is it easy? Not always. Is it worth it? Most definitely Yes! On a personal note, I love the way the author, Pat Schmatz, incorporates parts of another book in her story. She tied it together so well, that I started reading *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak as soon as I finished *Bluefish*.

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