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Loser



Synopsis

From renowned Newbery-winning author Jerry Spinelli comes a powerful story about how not fitting in just might lead to an incredible life. This classic book is perfect for fans of *Â Gordon Korman* and *Carl Hiaasen*. Just like other kids, Zinkoff rides his bike, hopes for snow days, and wants to be like his dad when he grows up. But Zinkoff also raises his hand with all the wrong answers, trips over his own feet, and falls down with laughter over a word like "Jabip." Other kids have their own word to describe him, but Zinkoff is too busy to hear it. He doesn't know he's not like everyone else. And one winter night, Zinkoff's differences show that any name can someday become "hero." With some of his finest writing to date and great wit and humor, Jerry Spinelli creates a story about a boy's individuality surpassing the need to fit in and the genuine importance of failure. As readers follow Zinkoff from first through sixth grade, it becomes impossible not to identify with and root for him through failures and triumphs. The perfect classroom read.

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

Donald Zinkoff is one of the greatest kids you could ever hope to meet. He laughs easily, he likes people, he loves school, he tries to rescue lost girls in blizzards, he talks to old ladies. The only

problem is, he's a loser. Until fourth grade, Zinkoff's uncontrollable giggling in class, sloppy handwriting, horrible flute playing, bad grades, clumsiness, and ineptitude at sports go largely unnoticed. When he blows a race for his team, however, his transition to loserdom is complete: "[Loser] is the word. It is Zinkoff's new name. It is not in the roll book." Fortunately, he doesn't really notice. As he did in *Stargirl*, Newbery Medal-winning author Jerry Spinelli again explores the cruelty of a student body and how it does and doesn't affect one student, pure of spirit. Presumably if *Loser* makes one child view a "different kid" as a three-dimensional character, Spinelli will consider his book successful. The author recounts Zinkoff's story--a case study of sorts--in short sentences from a deliberately reportorial point of view, documenting the first years of the boy's life and his evolution into a loser. What makes the book charming and buoyant is that the reader, like Zinkoff's parents and his favorite teacher, appreciates the boy's oblivious joie de vivre and his divine quirks. What is less compelling about the novel is the "let this be a lesson to us" heavy-handedness that accompanies the reportorial approach. Still, Spinelli comes through again with a lively, often moving story with humor and heart to spare. (Ages 8 to 12) --Karin Snelson --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

Spinelli (*Maniac Magee*; *Stargirl*) here enters the consciousness of the social pariah. Beginning with Donald Zinkoff's early days of invisibility and ignorant bliss ("Maybe it annoys you that he seems to be having even more fun than you, but it's a one-second thought and it's over," says the omniscient narrator in the opening chapter), the narrative follows the boy through his instant love for Satterfield Elementary School, then zeroes in on the turning point: "In fourth grade Zinkoff is discovered.... Big-kid eyes are picky. They notice things that the little-kid eyes never bothered with.... Twenty-seven classmates now turn their new big-kid eyes to Zinkoff." On field day in June, the fourth graders call him as they see him: "Each pronounces it perfectly. 'Loser.' " Through the use of the omniscient narrator, Spinelli builds up to the boy's "unveiling" with examples of Zinkoff's uncontrollable giggling in first grade, his one-sided friendship with his next-door neighbor, and his forced poor-sport behavior on the soccer field when the hero's team does not win. Spinelli balances Zinkoff's mistreatment by his peers with abundant love from his family and the friendship of the quirky neighbors to whom his postman father delivers mail especially the Waiting Man who patiently anticipates his brother's return from Vietnam, and a toddler attached to a clothesline with a leash. Spinelli creates no idealistic ending here; instead, with a near tragedy, the author demonstrates the differences between those who can continue to see with the more compassionate "little-kid eyes" and those who lose sight of what is truly important. Ages 8-12. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business

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I personally love this book and have since I read it in 8th grade. The copy I read then only had the front cover reading "Loser" smeared on a drawn chalkboard. No description. Curiosity got the best of me and all I can say is that it exceeded my expectations...Mostly because I didn't know what to expect. Honestly, it's hard to describe. If you want it summed up, I guess you could say it's essentially like being a kid in a classroom all over again, only you're seated next to and inside the mind of That One Funny Misfit Kid-Zinkoff. (Also, that name is awesome.) ^.^

This is the first Jerry Spinelli book that my third grade son read and it launched him into reading many other Spinelli books (such as Maniac Magee and Wringer, also both excellent books). This book will make you and your child think deeply about how not every child will fit into the mold of what most kids and adults consider popular or successful (such as the great athlete or the straight A student). The "Loser" in this book does not have these more commonly accepted gifts of athletic ability or great academic performance. But as you progress through the book, you grow to really appreciate the specialness and lovability of the main character. Highly recommended.

I liked this book. It was a good story, but it was also kinda odd. Why you ask? Because the whole first part of the book is good, but it doesn't have to do with the rest of the book. If I tell the story, I won't have the story go like this: Once there was a family who ate cheese for dinner every night. They had a daughter, who married a guy from Israel. The part about the daughter isn't relevant to the family who ate cheese. I felt like that's what happened with this story. The reason I didn't give the book 3 stars is because of the main characters in the book. The "main" character is a kid named Donald, but my favorite character(s) are Polly and a guy that Donald calls the waiting man. I love these two characters because they are so pure.

Not exactly remarkable, but full of intensely realistic views into a child's head from 1st to 6th grade--a child who is different, sometimes in a likable way, sometimes less understandably. Spinelli is an artist in the way he weaves together words, not in the overwhelming, forced, or boring style of some authors, but in occasional, beautiful descriptions of scenery, setting, and character decision-making. This is a great read-aloud book, if only for the purpose of thinking about and discussing differences and individual worth. Not everything is resolved by the end, but such is also life.

Great book

Excellent book and that's coming from a 46 year old adult who does not have children. I was super impressed by both the story and how it was written. The main character was so endearing and let's face it, we all have known at one time or another someone similar. Net net, I recommend this story for everyone, not just parents or teachers.

Hi this is the best chapter book I have read in 2017 so I do recommend this book to everyone

I want everyone I know, especially teachers, to read this book. Jerry Spinelli, I will buy every book I see that you have written. You hit me right in the feels, make me laugh so hard and have me walk away with new views on the world. I will reread this book.

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