

PSC Reviews

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Whittenberg, Allison LIFE IS FINE Rating: R Grade Level: 8-12

Samara Tuttle's life is far from perfect: she's lonely, she's bored at school, she hates her mother's loser boyfriend, and she's in love with an orangutan. However, when Mr. Halbrooks, an elderly, dignified, and engaging substitute teacher takes over her English class by leading a spirited discussion about a poem, her life begins to change. He inspires her to take charge of her future and helps awaken a passion for poetry. Can she make it even if he's not there to guide her along? Life is Fine is a sweet, coming-of-age story that will appeal to teenagers who might feel like they don't fit in or who are waiting for their own passion to come along. The writing is natural, the characters are complex, and readers will root for Samara even at her most vulnerable moments.

Lindo, Elvira MANOLITO FOUR-EYES Rating: R Grade Level: 4-7

The way Manolito Four-Eyes tells it, anyone who's a little important has a nickname, and with his nickname being Four-Eyes, insulting him is a waste of time. Manolito is a talkative, hilarious kid who knows there's no one like him and is proud of it. Whether he's avoiding getting his glasses broken by the school bully, telling his entire life story to a school psychologist, or being bailed out by his "whole lotta cool" grandpa when he's caught drawing on the apartment complex walls, Manolito Four-Eyes is undoubtedly a whole lotta fun. The book Manolito Four-Eyes is laugh-out-loud funny at times, with nary a dull moment. Those who like Leonore Cook's Alvin Ho: Allergic to Girls, School, and Other Scary Things, as well as Roald Dahl's The Twits, will enjoy Manolito Four Eyes.

Ives, David VOSS: HOW I COME TO AMERICA AND AM HERO, MOSTLY Rating: R Grade Level: 5-8

The hero of the book is Vospop Vsklwcdztwczky, but you can call him Voss for short. Voss: How I Come to America and am Hero, Mostly is a wacky, satirical, and ultimately endearing story of how Voss, a Slobovian boy, comes to America, goes through a series of odd and comical adventures, and ends up a hero. The story is told through Voss's letters, written in broken English, and sent to his best friend back in Slobovia. While the writing, spelling, and satire may trip up younger readers in understanding the humor, others (adults included!) will laugh out loud at the hilarity that ensues as Voss encounters a rich entrepreneur (and his spoiled daughter), a sinister hospital, a girl he thought he had gotten away from, all in his attempts to save the day. The story reads like a modern fairy tale full of adventure, wit, and humor.

Bryant, Annie BEACON STREET GIRLS: OUT OF BOUNDS Rating: AD- Grade Level: 6-8

Reminiscent of the Babysitter's Club, only in a more modern setting, the Beacon Street Girls series centers on a group of five girls with passions ranging from soccer to art to theater to entrepreneurship who stay friends through thick and thin. While readers might enjoy the spirit of camaraderie among the

girls and the girls' pluckiness at facing whatever obstacles come their way, the writing is weak, the miscellaneous characters are hard to keep track of, and the main five girls overwhelmingly saccharine sweet. *Beacon Street Girls: Out of Bounds* is about the mishaps and adventures that ensue of putting on a talent show as a fundraiser to save a local movie house. The story is unremarkable and too long to keep interest, but has a satisfying end. The best parts of the book are the instant message conversations between the various characters, the diary entries of some of the girls, and posters created to sell the fundraiser.

Siverstsen, Linda and Tosh *GENERATION GREEN: THE ULTIMATE TEEN GUIDE TO LIVING AN ECO-FRIENDLY LIFE* Rating: AD Grade Level: 7-12

Generation Green is a good introductory guide to environmental issues written by a mother-son team who seem to practice what they preach. Teens will find the writing fluid and humorous without being forced or overdone, although the tone can sometimes border on preachy. The guide covers issues of water shortage, erosion, oil, food production, wastes of technology, consumerism, vehicle use, among other topics, through well-documented chapters, interviews with environmental teen activists and celebrities, practical suggestions, and resources at the back. While the book is manageable in terms of size and length of discussion, and is a worthwhile read to those who want a better grasp of the issues, as a guide, it is not super effective. Links to websites are included in big paragraphs of text and not necessarily repeated in an easily digestible format at the end, practical suggestions are not highlighted, there is no index, and for those wanting to review or skim, there are few summaries. In addition, some of the suggestions don't seem to take into consideration the economic and situational reality of most of the population, which might make some teens write the book off as a whole.