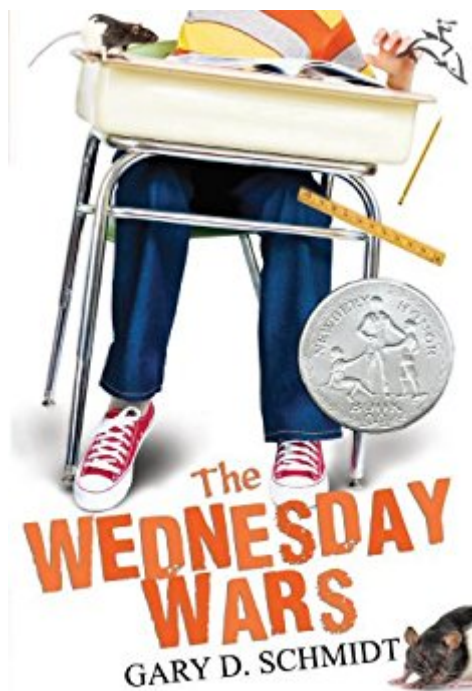


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The Wednesday Wars



Synopsis

In this Newbery Honor-winning novel, Gary D. Schmidt offers an unforgettable antihero. The *Wednesday Wars* is a wonderfully witty and compelling story about a teenage boy's mishaps and adventures over the course of the 1967-68 school year in Long Island, New York. Meet Holling Hoodhood, a seventh-grader at Camillo Junior High, who must spend Wednesday afternoons with his teacher, Mrs. Baker, while the rest of the class has religious instruction. Mrs. Baker doesn't like Holling, but he's sure of it. Why else would she make him read the plays of William Shakespeare outside class? But everyone has bigger things to worry about, like Vietnam. His father wants Holling and his sister to be on their best behavior: the success of his business depends on it. But how can Holling stay out of trouble when he has so much to contend with? A bully demanding cream puffs; angry rats; and a baseball hero signing autographs the very same night Holling has to appear in a play in yellow tights! As fate sneaks up on him again and again, Holling finds Motivation in the most unexpected places and musters up the courage to embrace his destiny, in spite of himself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a fantastic book with all the ingredients: great voice, humor, surprises, love story, tugs at your heart, disappointment, victories. The best compliment I can give Mr. Schmitt is this book made me want to read Shakespeare. Okay, that's the second best compliment I can give. The very best compliment is simply this: Gary Schmitt has infused *The Wednesday Wars* with tons and tons of heart. And even though it is set in a past era, it easily relates to the present. READ THIS BOOK.

I didn't like this one at first, because I thought Holling wasn't acting like a seventh grader. But I was surprised later at how real it was, and how much I related to Mrs. Baker and how much I hated Holling's parents.

I'm not a junior high school boy, but an avid reader and fiction writer. I read literary fiction, contemporary fiction, historical fiction, and an occasional mystery or romance. I DON'T read YA books. When my readers' group assigned it as our monthly reading choice, I felt very much as Holly Hoodhood must have felt when his teacher, Mrs. Baker, ordered him to read the Shakespeare plays. This is how it all came about: Wednesdays are a special kind of hell for Holling Hoodhood. While his classmates go to mass or synagogue, he is the only Presbyterian kid in his 7th grade class with nothing to do but clean blackboards and erasers. Until Mrs. Baker takes charge of him and assigns him to study Shakespeare. In the interest of full disclosure, I must confess that I love Shakespeare. Holling, of course, is convinced that Mrs. Baker has assigned this curriculum for him because she hates his guts. As he struggles through the plays, both he and Mrs. Baker learn a lot, not only about Shakespeare, but about family, friendship, race, war, social upheaval, and eventually about death. Written with a great sense of humor and wonderful character development, "*The Wednesday Wars*" by Gary Schmidt is an excellent book for readers of all ages.

This book delivered much more than I expected when I first started reading it. There was so much to love about this book. It is a coming of age story set in the 60's in Long Island, NY. Although the story could have been set in the present day, I do think that today's youth in general have lost their innocence or have become somewhat jaded sooner than in the era of the book. The character of Holling (as written) would not have worked as well in a modern setting for that reason. As one should expect with Junior High boys, there is definitely humor in the book, and all of the attendant issues of being in Junior High School. However, I didn't expect to find poignancy and more serious issues intertwined with the rest. The author manages to accomplish it all without becoming either

too sappy or too morose. I'm not necessarily talking about the current-events of the time, such as the Vietnam War, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy, and the hippie era, although those things are mentioned and add to the overall tone of the book. The author layers many of the more serious issues into the story in often subtle ways. Parental neglect or care, dysfunctional family dynamics, bullying, racism, dishonesty, school politics, true friendship, and student / teacher relationships are all a part of this book. I like that the characters are not wholly good or bad, but are human. I loved that the plays of Shakespeare were used as a device in this book. They aptly portray the human condition, and the broad spectrum between good and bad in all of us. There are definitely lessons from literature about the human experience and oneself. The main character had a ridiculous name, Holling Hoodhood, which eventually grew on me a bit. I love that the "village" stepped in as needed to help Holling have opportunities to learn how to become a better man. His parents were sorely lacking in that area. Who wouldn't want a teacher like Mrs. Baker, a friend like Danny or Doug, or a kind adult like Mr. Goldman to help them? Sometimes the small things people do to or for us in life can have the greatest impact.

Finally, a book that can stand beside Bel Kaufman's "Up the Down Staircase" and Frances Gray Patton's "Good Morning, Miss Dove". Good teachers have almost been driven out of existence because the added baggage of standardized tests, profiles, red tape and (lack of) discipline hamper them at every turn. This marvelous gem truly gives credence to the phrase "it takes a village..." I have become a great fan of Gary Schmidt since my grandson had to read this book as well as "Okay, for Now". As a parent, this reminds us that we are ALL teachers of those around us...some for good, some for bad.

My daughter is in 6th grade & was required to read this for summer reading & then do a book report. She complained about how boring the book was the whole time she read it & she normally loves reading .. She did say the ending gets better though. I asked all of her friends about the book when they came over & not a single one of them enjoyed the book:(

A kid sits through wednesday sessions with his teacher leading to miraculous interventions, extraordinary achievements and in general has a kiddie version of "Forrest Gump life"! As an insight into the tumultuous times that were the 60s, and the prejudices and constraints that kids had to strive through then, this book provides an excellent coverage. It has enough surprises, and feel-goods to make a kid read through the book to the end. The story is fairly predictable and not

complex, so serves well to attract the not-so voracious readers too. For the more mature (kid) readers, the lure of the underlying themes, semantics, and social comments is definite plus.

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