

Twerp

Mark Goldblatt

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A beautiful coming of age tale, *Twerp* follows the budding writer Julian Twerski as he navigates through the rocky period of 6th grade. Julian writes his experiences down as an English assignment, meant to both punish and encourage reflection upon his actions after a weeklong suspension from school. Guilt ridden, Julian avoids description of the incident that landed him in this position, instead giving a detailed, humorous portrayal of his daily life, filled with his frustrations, heartbreak, and joys. He writes about setting off fireworks, writing love letters, and being the fastest kid in school, but this is a tale ultimately about growing up and taking responsibility.

Although the story is set in 1969, the major themes of bullying, young relationships, and identity hold true today. The cast of characters that surround the easygoing Julian are quite well developed and relatable, including the scheming leader Lonnie, the wise big sister Amelia, and the supportive Eduardo.

I strongly recommend this book for 5th to 8th graders. It encourages a love of reading, providing a positive introduction to poetry and Shakespeare. It addresses important factors in growing up, such as peer pressure and taking responsibility for yourself. It mixes heavier and lighter storylines together, but stays hopeful the entire time. Julian makes many mistakes, and we, the readers, get to accompany him while he figures out where he went wrong and faces the consequences. I enjoyed the read. If you are ages 10 - 14 and enjoy realistic fiction, I would definitely recommend this book for you.

Recommended Titles:

Crash by Jerry Spinelli

The Janitor's Boy by Andrew Clements

Hoot by Carl Hiaasen