

The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora

Pablo Cartaya

Reviewed by: Rishi Chillara, 14 Years Old

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This hot summer in Miami should have been an ordinary one for 13-year-old Arturo Zamora. The way he usually spends his summer is playing basketball with his two best friends, and shopping for new shoes to play it in. Yet this summer, he faces a whole load of problems, such as trying to ask out a certain hazel-eyed girl that moved into his apartment, actually helping out at *La Cocina De La Isla*, and most important of all, trying to protect his restaurant and his home from being torn down by a rich businessman. Now, Arturo must learn to keep himself together and believe in himself, a thing that he has a hard time doing or risk a BIG EPIC FAIL!

This novel is an inspiring tale of friendship, family, love, and fighting for what you believe in. It shows that the strength of family and love for the town is stronger than any haughty businessman trying to win over residents with extravagant festivals. I love how wonderfully woven the cultural values of Cubans and Hispanics are in this book. It made the background of the story much more understandable and made many interesting topics pop up in the book that I wanted to learn more about. This book is very hilarious, too, as Arturo puts himself in funny predicaments throughout the story and some made me laugh a few times. I loved the theme of this book, how Arturo, a reluctant learner fearful of failure and thus does not seize opportunities was able to overcome this fear and take a stand against the fall of their restaurant and the place that he has known as home through the help of his family, Abuela, and the writings of Abuelo and Jose Marti. All of this, in the end, helped him be a leader and take the contingency to save his restaurant at a satisfying conclusion to the story. The book is a beautiful story about believing in the virtues of love and faith (el amor y la fe) and how it will help you. This book has many sensitive topics handled properly and life lessons that people will take pleasure in learning, in this resplendent, enjoyable book.

Some plot points and thoughts do not get fleshed out enough. I know, this is in Arturo's point of view, but it would have been nice to see just more thoughts on the matters mentioned in the book. This, however, is in certain parts and is not common around the book. Other than this, I did not find any other complaints about the book. The rest of the book is very well-made and well-crafted. No violence and language are present (just funny name-calling); however, in terms of romance, Arturo keeps trying to profess his love to Carmen, so expect this type of theme throughout the book. Other than that, I would recommend the book for people of ages 10 and up as this is the age where they understand the themes presented in this book. This could be a good book, a hidden gem that you could read in your spare time. Overall, this wonderful novel is a loving tale of not giving up on your family and home and fighting for what you believe in most, and a good gem that deserves all the attention it is garnering.

Recommended Titles:

Stargirl, by Jerry Spinelli

Marcus Vega Doesn't Speak Spanish, by Pablo Cartaya

The First Rule of Punk, by Celia C. Perez

