

President of the Whole Fifth Grade

Sherrri Winston

Reviewed by: Annie, 23

Star Teen Book Reviewer of *Be the Star You Are!* Charity

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This novel is fantastic. Children won't be able to keep their noses out of Sherrri Winston's masterfully woven tale of personal growth. The protagonist is Brianna Justice, a fifth-grader with a big dream. She wants to grow up to own and run a cupcake bakery and make millions, and the first step to reach this goal is to become president of the whole fifth grade. Brianna is confident she has the election in the bag until a new student, Jasmine Moon, nominates herself for the position. The two begin a campaign feud that begins passive aggressively and turns nasty, creating a rift between Brianna and her tight knit group of girl friends. Brianna is faced with temptations that threaten her integrity: cheating, backstabbing, and exposing others' secrets. Although she eventually wins the election, Brianna learns that the most important thing, more important than personal success, is friendship, honesty, and generosity.

Brianna, along with the rest of the Winston's cast, have distinct, individual voices. Their personalities complement each other as well as clash, like all real life friendships or rivalries, and the novel showcases the importance of relationships, even for fifth graders. Readers will feel the emotions Brianna feels as she experiences pride, guilt, envy, and humility. They will understand Brianna completely.

Winston's incorporation of cupcake recipes, bold, and font, gives the novel personality. Her plot draws constant analogies between the fifth grade presidential race and United States presidential history, and her audience will come away with knowledge they didn't even realize they were learning. Winston even manages to break down the importance of philanthropy, introducing this topic to readers likely for the first time. I thoroughly enjoyed this story and highly recommend it for teacher read-aloud in elementary schools, young readers and teens alike. As youngsters grow, this novel will help them put their friendship drama into perspective and teach a lesson in individual integrity.