

The Wednesday Wars

Gary D. Schmidt

Reviewed by: Deidre Norman, 15

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

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Holling Hoodhood—right away you know there's going to be something good about a character with that name. You keep waiting to see if he's going to go by that name or some weird nickname, but no, Holling it is and you grow to see the Hoodhood name is a proud name to have. In Holling's world, you're either attending Jewish classes or Catholic classes on Wednesday afternoons—unless you're Presbyterian like Hollings—in which case, you spend your Wednesdays with Mrs. Baker. The afternoons start off typically with geography and math, cleaning erasers (huh?), carrying cream puffs (!); then it's on to Shakespeare. Well, Shakespeare gets Holling: the girl, sports stardom, teacher admiration, self-confidence and self-esteem. Teachers, students, parents, sisters, boy and girls—everyone grows up and closer together for a happy ending.

I like how Holling is realistic about himself. He laughs at himself. He knows that sometimes he does stupid things. He's just a really great guy. Good things come his way a lot. The quoting Shakespeare was a little freaky, but I guess it helped make his character. I liked the way Holling talked to the reader like "I know this is going to go bad; don't you think this is going to go bad?" His character is so real. It's like you're standing right there beside him. The romance between Holling and Meryl is just enough not to be mushy. There's a war (Vietnam) going on, but mostly within Holling's relationships with his family, his teachers, his friends. That's actually a good way to help kids who weren't born at that time to feel some of the feelings people were experiencing.

This is a good read for elementary and middle school students. I bought the hardcover book from a bookstore simply because I knew Gary Schmidt was a great writer. I had read other books by the author from my school library. I would give this book as a gift because the characters and the storyline stay fresh every time. This was a fun read. Here are more books about guy characters finding themselves:

Recommended Titles:

Dave at Night by Gail Carson Levine

Adam Canfield of the Slash by Michael Winerip

Jeremy Fink and the Meaning of Life by Wendy Mass