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The Dirt Diary



Synopsis

Eighth grade never smelled so bad. Rachel Lee didn't think anything could be worse than her parents splitting up. She was wrong. Working for her mom's new house-cleaning business puts Rachel in the dirty bathrooms of the most popular kids in the eighth grade. Which does not help her already loser-ish reputation. But her new job has surprising perks: enough dirt on the in-crowd to fill up her (until recently) boring diary. She never intended to reveal her secrets, but when the hottest guy in school pays her to spy on his girlfriend Rachel decides to get her hands dirty.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

We have an 11 year old daughter who doesn't like to read much and she really liked this book and series! That is always such a plus! She likes the characters and it is written well. She likes it because it was fun and easy to read and the characters were relevant to her as she gets ready to move to junior high. This book is part of a three book series and I believe the author is writing another book to be released in 2016. We have one daughter that reads tons of books and one who doesn't choose to read much. I was very happy to find a book that she enjoyed and read on her own without us having to push her to read! I found her reading in her room one day all on her own!

I have been slowly getting more middle grade books on my shelves and this one was a good one. It was cute, funny, and very light hearted. The story revolves around Rachel and her family, friends,

and cute boys. Characters were likable and fun, the writing was clean and simple, the story just right. Rachel is in the 8th grade, she has one friend, a long time unattainable crush, and a school full of enemies. The classic mean girls story. Rachel gets picked up a bunch. She is a very shy quiet girl, a perfect target for pranks and laughs. Her father recently left to live in another state. Rachel has a grand plan to get her parents back together. In order for the plan to take flight, she had to use 300.00 dollars from her college fund and needs to find a way to replace it before her mother finds out. She takes a job helping her mother clean houses. This is where all the fun begins, she is cleaning houses of her enemies and more. She is getting all the dirt and Rachel must find the moral obligation of keeping secrets or letting it all out. I thought the book was just a lot of fun. It was a bit predictable and of course had some classic cliches but it didn't take away from the likable credit. The characters were cute, relatable, and realistic. The problems dealt with in the book are everyday problems that pre teens deal with. Bullies, death of loved ones, parents divorcing, and fights among friends. Rachel was very likable even though she made some pretty dumb moves in her life. I could see where she was coming from and it was hard to be mad at her for acting crazy. She didn't always think about her actions before she set forth to make a mess of things, but what 13 year olds do? I felt bad for her. Her life just seemed to suck and her mother or father never noticed. She trudged through her everyday getting laughed at, pranked, and feeling insecure. She did have one friend that made her days a bit more bearable but even that had low points. She made some dumb moves yes, but of course she learned from those mistakes and that is what these books are all about. The entire story was just quirky. With the pranks, the cooking, the characters. It was put together well and the writing style was great for this type of book. Not a boring or dull moment. It ended in a nice clean wrap up in the end. The only improvement I could think of is a little more depth. Other than that great read. Recently I found out there will be more and I do believe I will read that book too. I would love to spend a little more time in Rachel's world. A great addition to my middle grade collection.

I received a copy via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. *The Dirt Diary* by Anna Staniszewski is a middle grade novel about a girl facing troubles at home and bullying at school. I wasn't sure what to expect because I don't read a lot of middle grade novels, but I was pleasantly surprised. Being a victim of bullying at a younger age, I think that a story like this one, where the victim is an imperfect character, is important to note. Not only does the protagonist learn to stand up for herself, but she also learns an important lesson herself. Bullying is never okay, but we see in this story that there are always two sides to a story. Written in fast-paced prose and

introducing a witty protagonist, *The Dirt Diary* is a great quick read. The quirkiness of Rachel, the protagonist, makes the story unique because it makes her character unforgettable. Her creative way of cussing (though she doesn't actually swear) is a funny touch and her character growth makes the story run smoothly. A character like Rachel is a great example for younger readers, especially those suffering from bullying and from separated parents. Her need to fix the broken issues in her house and her desire to be noticed by the most popular guy are very relatable issues in today's youth. The idea of a dirt diary that shows all of the dirty secrets of the rich and popular isn't something entirely new, but it is still entertaining, especially when the antagonist of the novel is so horrible. Staniszewski's novel is very tongue in cheek, especially with how Rachel views the world and how she is treated. At least, it's a bit of a risk for a middle grade novel, but this makes it a lot more fun. Though *The Dirt Diary* is a slightly predictable read, it's still good fun. I loved reading this one because it was so different from what I've been reading lately. The storyline was refreshing and the characters endearing. If you enjoy novels about girls who come into themselves, while also learning to trust and appreciate those who love her, then this is the novel for you. Also, there's a touch of romance, and who doesn't like a little dose of that in their literature?

Rachel has a plan--she borrows almost \$300 from her college savings account and is on a mission. Her mission seems simple--she wants to get her parents back together. The money is being used to go to Florida where her father has moved. To earn the money back, she must win the baking contest while she also helps her mother in her new business cleaning houses. Little does she realize she will be helping clean the houses of her fellow classmates. During this time she keeps a diary--her dirt diary--of all her secret thoughts and feelings. Ms. Staniszweski has captured this age perfectly--the awkwardness, the feelings of not fitting and also the interaction between both peers and grownups. Rachel is reluctant for her mom to move on from her dad and I could feel and relate to her pain through her interactions with Mr. Hammond. Laugh out loud moments fill this delightful book and it will leave readers wanting to read more books by Ms. Staniszweski. Be sure to have on hand her *My Unfairytale* series too.

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