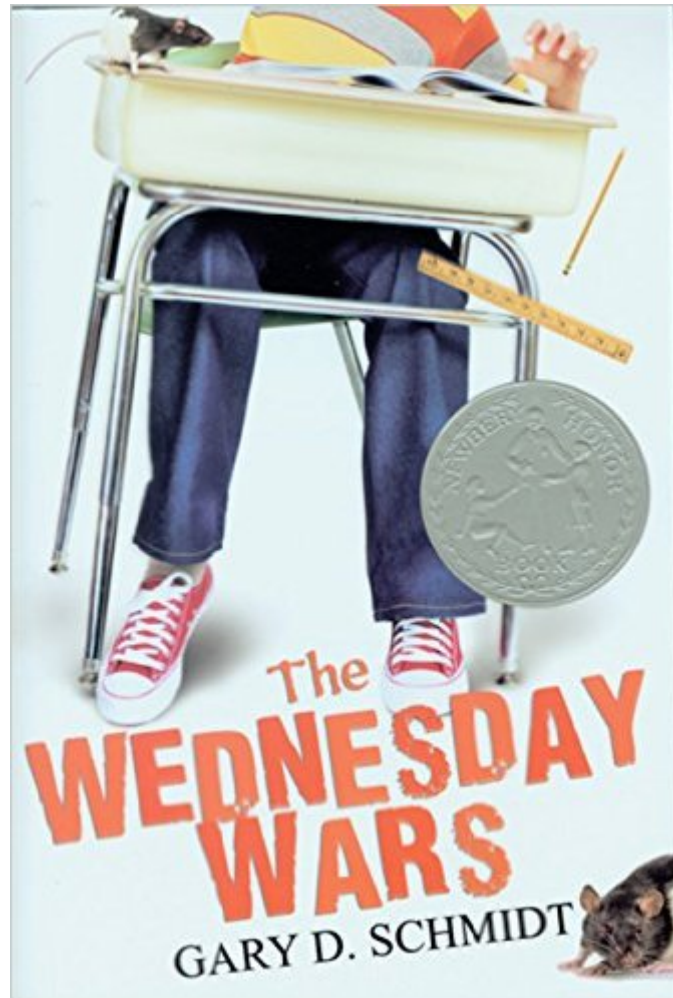


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The Wednesday Wars



Synopsis

In this Newbery Honor-winning novel, Gary D. Schmidt offers an unforgettable antihero. The *Wednesday Wars* is a wonderfully witty and compelling story about a teenage boy's mishaps and adventures over the course of the 1967-68 school year in Long Island, New York. Meet Holling Hoodhood, a seventh-grader at Camillo Junior High, who must spend Wednesday afternoons with his teacher, Mrs. Baker, while the rest of the class has religious instruction. Mrs. Baker doesn't like Holling, but he's sure of it. Why else would she make him read the plays of William Shakespeare outside class? But everyone has bigger things to worry about, like Vietnam. His father wants Holling and his sister to be on their best behavior: the success of his business depends on it. But how can Holling stay out of trouble when he has so much to contend with? A bully demanding cream puffs; angry rats; and a baseball hero signing autographs the very same night Holling has to appear in a play in yellow tights! As fate sneaks up on him again and again, Holling finds Motivation, the Big Man, in the most unexpected places and musters up the courage to embrace his destiny, in spite of himself.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 990L (What's this?)

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (May 18, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 054723760X

ISBN-13: 978-0547237602

Product Dimensions: 0.8 x 5.2 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (362 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

Customer Reviews

After now reading THE WEDNESDAY WARS three times, it remains for me the book of the year

and my pick for the next Newbery Medal. "Toads, beetles, bats, light on you!" In September of 1967, in the suburbs of Long Island, Holling Hoodhood begins seventh grade at Camillo Junior High. Holling happens to be the only Presbyterian student in Mrs. Baker's class, and so on Wednesday afternoons, "when at 1:45 sharp, half of my class went to Hebrew School at Temple Beth-El, and, at 1:55, the other half went to Catechism at Saint Adelbert's," Mrs. Baker finds herself responsible for dealing with her one remaining student. Holling, who believes Mrs. Baker hates him because of this situation, spends that first month's Wednesday afternoons completing classroom chores that his teacher assigns him. "The Wednesdays of September passed in a cloudy haze of chalk dust." But, after hilarious and unintended consequences result from Holling's missteps in carrying out several of his assigned tasks, Mrs. Baker decides to shift gears and spend subsequent Wednesday afternoons "doing" Shakespeare with her student. It turns out that there are also hilarious and unintended consequences that result from this new course of action. For while Holling undertakes his experiencing of the Bard with the belief that, "Teachers bring up Shakespeare only to bore students to death," it turns out that he recognizes some terrific stories when he reads them and -- thanks to Caliban -- recognizes some great new (old) curses which he sets to practicing until, in times of great adversity, they leap as naturally from his tongue as do the phrases that are more commonly heard amongst today's young rapper wannabes: "She put her red pen down."

Praise, like profanity, has to be doled out carefully. If a reviewer is a particularly enthusiastic sort (ahem!) and prefers to lavish cuddles and kisses on every book that crosses their plate then what exactly are they supposed to do when something truly extraordinary appears before them? Use up all your good stuff too early in the season and you've nothing left. Fortunately for me, I took precautions. I've been on permanent Newbery Lookout this year. Anything and everything that might be a contender, I've snatched up mighty quick in the hopes of getting some early buzz going. And while it's been a nice year, I think everyone will agree that the Spring 2007 season has turned out to be fairly so-so. Nobody is talking about any books with any real passion quite yet. That is, until whispers started to surround "The Wednesday Wars" by Gary Schmidt. Whispers. Murmurs. Over-exaggerated winks accompanied by sharp elbow pokes to the ribcage. So when I finally managed to get my sticky little hands on a copy I had to do the standard Reviewer Cleansing of the Mind. I had to tell myself soothing things before I began along the lines of, "It's okay if you don't like it. Forget all the people who've already loved it. Clear your mind. Expand your soul. Breathe." Then I picked it up and forgot all of that. Good? Brother, you don't know the meaning of the word till you read this puppy. For those of you out there who think Gary D. Schmidt was done robbed **ROBBED**

of a Newbery for his, Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy, I think we've found ourselves something new to root for. Mrs. Baker hates Holling Hoodhood.

The Wednesday Wars by Gary Schmidt is like a hefty patchwork quilt. On one hand, The Wednesday Wars is really very long. So long that one can lose track of how everything interconnects. On the other hand, it's full of interesting and poignant stories. So many that by the end, I feel as if I've read a saga about Holling Hoodhood and Camillo Junior High. Actually, given that the definition of saga is a long, involved story or series of incidents, it seems I have. What are some of series of incidents? First, I'll start with the broad, sweeping ones. Holling's teacher seems to hate him. Although Holling at least initially seems clueless as to her reasons, I suspect it has something to do with his being the only student in her 1:45 class. The rest of his peers are attending a Catholic or Jewish religion class; Holling is of neither faith. Second, while helping Mrs. Baker clean her classroom one Wednesday afternoon, Holling accidentally sets loose two overgrown ferocious rats. The numerous and unsuccessful attempts to capture the rats make for the bulk of the slapstick, which seems out-of-place in an otherwise fairly serious novel. Third, after his peers suspect him of receiving a cream puff from Mrs. Baker as a reward, they threaten to hurt him unless he buys ones for the entire class. Holling's family isn't rich. Moreover, his parents are stringent. This means, Holling has to find a job to earn the money. Fourth, Mrs. Baker eventually comes up with a productive use of those Wednesday afternoons, which is requiring Holling to read all of Shakespeare's plays. This lands Holling into trouble with some bullies and leads to some minor slapstick, which this time comes off as funny. Within each of these plots are narrower, more defined events, ones that feel anecdotal in nature.

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