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You Don't Know Me

You don't know me
at all. You don't know the first thing
about me. You don't know where I'm
writing this from. You don't know
what I look like. You have no power
over me. What do you think I look
like? Skinny? Freckles? wire-rimmed
glasses over brown eyes? No, I don't
think so. Better look again. Deeper. It's
like a kaleidoscope, isn't it? One
minute I'm short, the next minute
tall, one minute I'm geeky, one
minute studly, my shape constantly
changes, and the only thing that stays
constant is my brown eyes. Watching
you. That's right, I'm watching you
right now. . . . a novel by David Klass



Synopsis

Moving, wholly involving, original, and emotionally true, *You Don't Know Me* is a multilayered young adult novel that presents a winning portrait of an understandably angst-ridden adolescent. John ("My father named me after a toilet!") wrestles with the certainty that no one really knows him -- not in his miserable home, and certainly not at school. It's true that no one can guess his hidden thoughts, which are hilarious, razor-sharp observations about lust, love, tubas, algebra, everything. And then there's his home: his father ran off years ago, so he's being raised by his mother, who works long hours, and by her boyfriend, whom John calls "the man who is not and never will be my father." This man is his enemy, an abusive disciplinarian who seems to want to kill John and, in a horrible final confrontation, nearly succeeds.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The 14-year-old narrator describes the physical and emotional abuse he experiences from his mother's boyfriend in this "well-conceived novel," said PW. "The hero's underlying sense of isolation and thread of hope will strike a chord with nearly every adolescent." Ages 13-up. (Aug.) Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Gr 7 Up-John, 14, makes himself unknowable, contemplating volumes about the absurdities of his

world while restraining most utterances to monosyllables. The narrative bounces between comic and serious elements, such as band director Steenwilly's glasses being blown off by the "saurian screech" of Violet's saxophone, juxtaposed with the all-too-real violence that John suffers at home and elsewhere. Klass blazes past his previous literary efforts stylistically, introducing elements of magical realism to gradually reveal a quirky, talented, and likable guy. Having been trashed by beautiful, shallow, and manipulative Gloria, John gradually discovers that down-to-earth Violet is truly the girl of his dreams. With his life already at one of its lowest points, the protagonist verbally abuses his algebra teacher, "Mrs. Moonface" and receives a week's suspension. He is viciously beaten by "the man who is not my father," and his mother doesn't know that her live-in almost-fianc‚ is a hard-drinking, violent crook until he nearly kills John on a night when she is out of town. The story concludes with the teen finding that he is life itself to his mother, and that he is liked by his peers and teachers. School is still "anti-school," not a place of fun and learning, and snotty girls are still snotty. The world may be "muddled and painful," but it is, "in the end, a love song,"-a rewarding and important message for all readers.-Joel Shoemaker, Southeast Junior High School, Iowa City, IACopyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I requested a sample of this book and nearly walked away from it after reading the first couple of chapters, unable to connect with the author's writing style or the protagonist in the novel. But in reading the reviews, I stumbled across one written by someone who had the same gut reaction I did. This person almost walked away as well, but stuck it out and wrote a raving review of the novel. So I figured, what the heck, it s/he could do it, so could I. What a blessing to have stumbled across that review! Had I not, I would have missed out on one of the best pieces of Y/A fiction I have ever read. Once the book was delivered to my Kindle I dove back in, eager to find out if what I'd read was true. And it was so much more than I could have ever expected. Certainly the beginning of the story is a little odd. The writing style, at first, seems a bit clunky and disjointed until you recognize the protagonist, John, is a twisted sort of fellow who's created a safe place, within his mind, in which to dwell. Once that concept is grasped, the story flows effortlessly. I noticed a few negative reviews which noted repetition. But once you immerse yourself in John's world, this repetition makes perfect sense. It's a reflection of the way in which his mind operates, filling spaces and voids in order to avoid reality. It conjured in my mind instances where I'd repeat pleasant or humorous ideas when the world around me was going a little bonkers. In short, it was a great mechanism with which to explore John's struggles to cope. David Klass, the author, has created a character the reader can

empathize with, can relate to and one you want to seek out and hug. John is an injured soul, trapped in an impossible circumstance. Abused by "the man who is not his father" on a near constant basis and unable to confide in his absentee mother, John internalizes his fear and anger and hatred. John also creates an alternate reality for himself, where tubas are bullfrogs and Mrs. Moonface has a secret plot to undermine the self-esteem of her students. Every single character in this book is alive and unique and interesting, even the crumbly ones. From the strange "friends who are not friends" to Glory Hallelujah to Mr. Steenwilly. They each, in their own special way, add so much dimension and heart to this breathtaking novel, their names and voices are impossible to forget. I implore you, if this novel rubs you the wrong way from the gate, give it a chance. It's wonderful. So much so that I have now sought out more of David Klass' writings and intend to consume them all. In short, this is a brilliant novel, with a unique twist on an all too common subject.

It's one of those cringey things a middle schooler would write, but really well done. A wonderful perspective into the world of a reserved boy who's trapped in a life that continually drains him. I'm reading this frequently.

Every year I pick a book out to give to people for Christmas - and this is the one for this year. I was amazed at what I read and in fact - read it twice over the span of a day - just to let it sink in, to immerse myself in the images created and to figure out where it was going... and how it was getting there. There are so many angles to this story - the voices that he hears in his head - that sometimes escape with consequences no one can imagine. The man who would be his step father - who he believes his mother would choose over him - only to find out later - almost too late - that he didn't know his mom as well as he thought he did and that she just might know him - the real him - after all. The girl who admires him from a far and finally has the courage to ask him out - setting into motion the beginning of the end of the story. The band teacher who can see beyond what is there.. and in the end rescues the boy. And then the boy - who you can see fall apart only to reject ways of falling totally off the edge - to attempt to rescue himself and ultimately doing just that. It's a thought provoking book.. That I can't wait to share with my friends and family.

The very best portrayal of a 14 year old's troubled childhood. Highly recommend for high school students. Cannot stop reading at all

This novel is beyond beautiful. It is realistic, strong, and really discusses hard topics. I couldn't put

this down; that's how amazing it was. This is a must read!

This was a GREAT book! I haven't read teen fiction in awhile - shame on me. This book was wonderfully written from the perspective of a hapless young teen who is abused by his step-father. In spite of the serious topic, this book had me laughing out loud.

Compared to all the other reviewers I must be the oddball. I had high hopes for this book, but just had trouble getting into it. I did feel for John with his life and remember those odd times of being a teenager (although I have great parents). I was terribly shy and had one friend; it was easy to relate to some things. However, as I said I just found the book on the boring side for me. This doesn't mean it's a bad book; it's just my kind of book. Read it and decide for yourself.

I just finished reading this book for school ! It was very well written I loved it a lot g

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