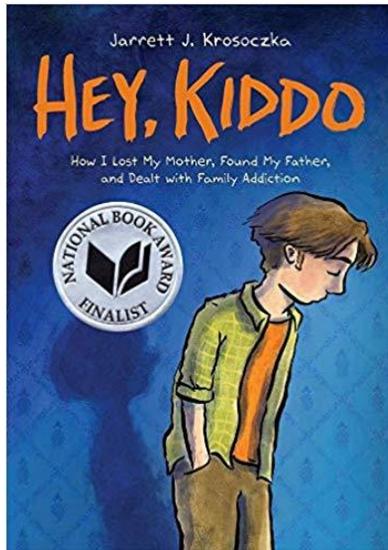


SPOTLIGHT ON BOOKS



Sometimes the strength and resiliency of people is amazing.

In Jarrett J. Krosoczka's graphic memoir *Hey Kiddo*, he presents himself as a rather meek albeit affable kid whose mother is in and out of rehab and jail, whose father is absent entirely until his later teenage years, and who is being raised by his sometimes rough-around-the-edges grandparents. Such issues are shown as "getting to him" emotionally, but he rarely seems to act out on it, uses art to cope, and for the most part keeps a positively outlook and is even able to forgive. In one scene he's shown as being bullied by older kids in a high school gym locker room. He's included this

memory, so it must have had impact, but that alone would have been enough to cripple me, let alone all the family drama. Somehow, Krosoczka comes across as amazingly well-adjusted.

In the latter half of last year I was honoured to be asked to be a graphic novel judge for the international CYBILS Awards (Children's and Young Adult Bloggers' Literary Awards). (As a side note, I donated a copy of all of the contending books to Yellowknife Public Library.) While *Hey Kiddo!* wound up winning in the young adult category and while I thoroughly enjoyed it, it didn't get my initial vote. Obviously it's an inspirational sort of story and I suppose teens dealing with their own issues and unconventional families might appreciate it, but to me it felt more like the sort of story an adult would appreciate, given its reflective quality. With the burnt orange monotonies, with the use of real artifacts embedded in some scenes, and the overall tone, it reads like an adult looking back rather than a child actually going through these things. Again, I realize that some teen readers will still gravitate toward such books and honestly, I am content with its taking top honours as it's a remarkable book, regardless of its audience.

John Mutford, Library Manager

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