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Painting The Black



Synopsis

In his senior year of high school, late bloomer Ryan Ward has just begun to feel the magic of baseball—the thrill of catching a wicked slider, of throwing a runner out, of training hard and playing hard. His friend Josh, the star of the team, has helped Ryan push his limits. But when Josh clearly pushes the limits too far, Ryan is faced with a heartbreaking dilemma: he must choose between his love for the game and his sense of integrity.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

PAINTING THE BLACKBY: Carl Deuker "A thrilling sports story "By the title you think it's about painting. But it's not, it's about baseball. As soon as you read the first page you'll be hooked, and find out it's about a lot more. Ryan Ward is the type of kid who works at home on the weekends, but isn't a geek or made fun of. He'd do enough to get through the day so he can go back to his safe little room in his safe little house. But when Josh Danils moves in at midnight Ryan's life will change in away he never expected. Ryan is your typical senior who isn't very athletic Sits around really doesn't have any friends. When Ryan goes over to introduce himself to Josh, a guy who is 6-2 200 pounds good-looking guy, they end up playing baseball at the park. Josh asks Ryan to catch for him Ryan is hesitant because he hurt his ankle and it never healed right but to his surprise Josh says he's the best catcher he's ever seen. Josh soon teaches Ryan about life. One day Josh packs up all his

stuff and goes and tries out for football. Well that's when Ryan starts to realize it's about attaching the day instead of just getting through it. So Ryan works out to get into shape every day. Finally baseball comes Ryan knows Josh will make it but Ryan's not sure if he will but Josh says He will. But to his surprise he's the only one who can catch Josh's slider, Ryan makes the team. Ryan's life is about to turn upside down in a way he never expected. Ryan soon finds out Josh is popular and feeds off it. But Ryan is proud of himself he is athletic and has made friends Ryan ends up having the best year of his life on the baseball team when his life starts to change.

Over the past two weeks I have been completely engrossed with a book by Carl Deuker, *Painting the Black*. I was particularly attracted by the fact that the story was centered around high school baseball. As an eighth grader who will be attending high school next year, the idea of reading a book placed in a high school was especially attractive. However, as I was soon to learn, this book deals with even greater, important themes. Ryan Ward is a shy high-school teenager, enjoying the summer before his senior year. A fanatic of baseball, who also plays catcher, Ryan has finally developed enough skill and courage to join the high school baseball team next spring. The cause of such a change in this usually timid boy is his new friend and neighbor, Josh Daniels. Josh is the complete opposite of Ryan, except for their mutual love of baseball. This common interest spurs their immediate friendship, as they spend the whole summer training for next baseball season. As school starts, Ryan and Josh lose sight of each other. While still being on friendly terms, Josh is extremely extroverted, and becomes one of the most popular kids at school. Ryan, on the other hand is rather introverted and has trouble associating with Josh's group of friends. However, as baseball season commences, their friendship returns to its original stage. As the season progresses, Ryan gains confidence and popularity. Unfortunately, Ryan is plagued by the knowledge of Josh's inappropriate behavior towards a girl, one day after practice. With this information Ryan is split between turning in the star pitcher or having a chance at winning the championship and keeping his new-found popularity. The multitude of themes addressed in this fiction book makes it appropriate for age groups 12 years and older. The issue of rape and maintaining one's integrity is especially important and should be dealt with around this age. Furthermore, it never hurts to reinforce these ideas as one grows older and faces various tribulations. Also, the storyline itself was straightforward and easy to comprehend. There is no doubt that this book will engage any reader over the age of 12. I would rate this book five stars because it kept me in the book and I never wanted to put it down.

F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote, "show me a hero and I'll write you a tragedy". Josh is certainly a local hero, as he leads his high school to great things on the athletic fields, but his personality and character are on the edge, and sometimes over the edge. I grew up with the idea that leaders, whether they be in the classroom or on the ballfield had to have a clean slate when it comes to your character, perhaps this book is making a societal statement that things have changed. We read about college and even high school athletes who have had run-ins with the law and they are freed to continue to play and to cause more ills. What a shame... despite the horrible feeling I got as I read about Josh the book is a quick fast read, that will lure you in and keep you turning pages faster than a Randy Johnson fastball. Enjoy... also try *Heart of a Champion* by Deuker, and *Bull Catcher* by Alden Carter.

Carl Deuker is quickly coming to dominate the sports novel for the young adult market. While his first novel, "On the Devil's Court," is still his most original, his last two, "Heart of a Champion" and "Painting the Black" show a deepening moral concern and a growing ability to write exciting sports scenes. All three of his novels are worth reading by anyone into sports and friendships and tough choices. My only concern is that he is starting to write himself into a corner: his last two novels are something of the same plot and characters. The narrators adore sports, but aren't that good at them; they meet somebody who is incredibly good at sports, but not so good at making moral choices; the narrator gets lifted up by his hero worship of his friend, then has to cope with the realization that his friend isn't perfect. A great plot, to be sure, but Deuker needs to take a step back and not do it a third time. That said, I would read anything Deuker writes: he's that good. He's especially good for young men who don't care much for reading; his plots move fast, his sentences rattle after each other as fast as lightning, and he doesn't pull any punches.

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