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Nothing



Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Grade 7 Up
On the first day of seventh grade, Pierre Anthon announces that life has no meaning and walks out of school. Everything, he has concluded, is a useless step toward death. Pierre's shaken classmates scramble to prove him wrong. They begin to assemble a "heap of meaning" in an abandoned sawmill. Each child must add a possession of the others' choosing. The children's need to avenge their losses spins out of control. A Muslim boy gives up his prayer mat and spirals into a crisis of faith. Another child must contribute the head of a beloved dog. A boy demands a girl's innocence. That girl demands something even more unthinkable. This story is horrifying, and draws obvious comparison to William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954). Despite the somewhat-idyllic provincial setting, the total lack of parental supervision is hard to swallow. Agnes, the narrator, is increasingly matter-of-fact as the horrors escalate, and this tempers the emotional impact of the story. This narrative distance also impedes character development; even Agnes remains unknowable. Her methodical telling sets a lulling pace, though, which sets the shocking events in high relief. The author writes sparsely, even simplistically, and some chapters are only the narrator's haikulike commentary. Danish kids apparently love a good existential discussion, but the group's circular debates may bore and/or confuse American middle schoolers.
Johanna Lewis, New York Public Library (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary

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Starred Review Indelible, elusive, and timeless, this uncompromising novel has all the marks of a classic. A group of Danish seventh-graders have their insulated suburban world jolted when classmate Pierre Anthon stands up and announces, "Nothing matters." He promptly takes up residence in a plum tree and creates an existential crisis among the group with his daily reports on the pointlessness of life. Feeling a need to refute the alarming notion, the kids decide to assemble a pile of objects that will prove Pierre Anthon wrong. It starts simply: Agnes gives up her favorite shoes; Dennis, his beloved books. But as each sacrifice grows in intensity, each kid enacts revenge by demanding an ever-greater sacrifice from the next. With chilling rapidity, the "heap of meaning" which they keep stored in an abandoned sawmill, is towering with gut-wrenching artifacts of their loss of innocence if innocence is something that ever existed. Teller offers just enough character detail to make the suffering and cruelty palpable. The terse purposefulness of her prose may put off some readers, but that singularity is also what will endure the test of time. Already a multiple award winner overseas, this is an unforgettable treatise on the fleeting and mutable nature of meaning. Grades 7-12. --Daniel Kraus --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

A disturbing story line - and I was hooked immediately. There are several characters and at first I was getting worried about how to keep them all straight. After a few chapters I realized it wasn't necessary to keep them straight which helped me enjoy the book even more. This was the book of choice for our recent book club and it sparked lots of conversation. Like many, I have set up to confirm when items are purchased, shipped, delivered. It was (and still is) funny to me that when I received updates that "Nothing" was purchased, "Nothing" was shipped, "Nothing" was delivered. This bit of irony is absolutely fitting for this particular book where "everything" and "nothing" are virtual characters in the story.

I started reading and reluctantly got up to get a granola bar and use the restroom, otherwise I was glued to every single page for 3 hours. Yes, this is a haunting and disturbing book. Yes, it is totally out of most people's comfort zones but for those of us who have oddly felt like we'd like to climb into a tree and watch it all go by....well, I related in some ways, was shocked in others, completely horrified at times but could see that this is LIFE as it's all happening now. Insert different characters, different places, add some conflict and some unkind words, mix it all up and you have war, crime

and everything that happens everyday everywhere. We should not be so shocked. Best book I've read in a long, long time. Unforgettable-

This is supposed to be a book for 12 and up but it's pretty heavy and disturbing. It's by a Danish author and translated into English. A 13-year-old boy decides life has no meaning so what is the point of school, work, dating, or anything. A group of his classmates want to prove him wrong so they start the "heap of meaning" in which each of them must add their most meaningful possession. Each kid chooses something for someone else to add and the choices get more horrible as the book goes on. I could see this book opening quite a discussion with teens--for young teens, they would need to be pretty mature.

Although I know I'm not in the demographic these kind of literature aims at, I must say that I can't help but think that there's a similar handling of some of the most well known stories, with young people trying to find the reason why they are different in a world that seems to be filled with unremarkable people. 'Nothing' is a novel that has more in common with 'The Lord of the Flies' than with more modern young adult literature. It asks very difficult, but important questions, and it doesn't shy away from exploring the implications of the answers. It's a thought provoking book that could introduce many 12/15 year olds to more challenging and profound pieces of literature. I'm a 33 year old male, and enjoyed it a lot! Give it a try!

Left me with an odd feeling. Disturbing yet enthralling, like some sort of weird, beautiful art piece. Not for the squeamish. I personally love this sort of thing, but I can imagine some people feeling frustrated and sickened by the book's pessimistic message. Has a faint 'Lord of the Flies' quality- I love LOTF, by the way! Very interesting. Although ultimately a very grim story, I found it darkly humorous at times. If you like that sort of thing, you'll enjoy it. There were deeply disturbing moments, however. The writing style was effective. Overall, an interesting book that left me feeling something I've never quite felt before.

Follows the style of the greats, like Huxley and Orwell.

Story was interesting. I'm still left reflecting on some of the concepts mentioned in the book. The only downside to the book is Teller's writing style-I was not a fan of the many fragments and run on sentences

"Nothing" is one of my favorite novels, and I've read it at least a dozen times, if not more. It is haunting, exciting, and disturbing in that it challenges what humans are capable of in groups under the cover of a justifiable cause. The writing style is amazing and sometimes vague about the more morbid actions, but that is what made it so chilling for me. However, it is definitely not suitable for 12-year-olds. It is what I would consider a book for older teens.

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