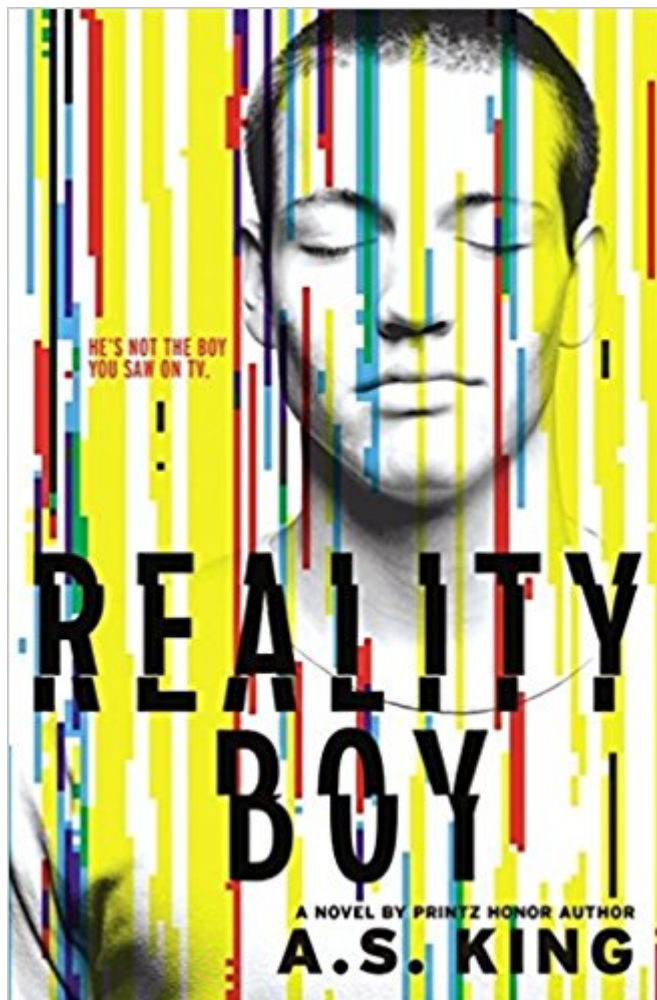


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Reality Boy



Synopsis

In this fearless portrayal of a boy on the edge, Printz Honor author A.S. King explores the desperate reality of a former child television 'star' struggling to break free of the oppressive anger he's felt since he was five years old. Twelve years later, he's still haunted by his rage-filled youth - which the entire world got to watch from every imaginable angle - and his anger issues have resulted in violent outbursts; everyone is just waiting for him to snap. And he's starting to feel dangerously close to doing just that - until he chooses to create possibilities for himself that he never knew he deserved.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up-When 16-year-old Gerald was 5, his parents made a contract to appear on a reality television show where a stage nanny offered techniques to mend their beyond-repair family. Gerald was targeted as the problem child when it was actually his psychopathic sister, Tasha, who was the true menace. His parents turned a blind eye, repeatedly allowing their firstborn to torment and threaten the lives of Gerald, sister Lisi, and even the mother while the edited television broadcasts skewed the truth. At first, readers will be taken aback when they learn that little on-camera Gerald defecated on Tasha's and his mother's belongings, earning him the infamous nickname "Crapper," but they will soon realize that in his young mind it was his only weapon of defense in a desperate situation. The horror and injustice of it all follow insecure, angry Gerald into his teens. So does fearsome, unemployed Tasha when she moves into the family's basement with her boyfriend, has loud and regular sex, and is still enabled by their parents. When Gerald warily falls in love with

Hannah, a schoolmate and coworker with family troubles of her own, "kidnapping" themselves by running away together seems their only recourse to wake up their parents. King's trademarks-attuned first-person narrative, convincing dialogue, realistic language, and fitting quirkiness-connect effectively in this disturbing, yet hopeful novel. Not since Norma Fox Mazer's disquieting *When She Was Good* (Scholastic, 1997) has an emotionally and mentally deranged sibling and dysfunctional parents wreaked such havoc on a main character who still manages to survive and grow beyond it.-Diane P. Tuccillo, Poudre River Public Library District, CO (c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Seventeen-year-old Gerald became infamous at age five, when he took a dump on his family's kitchen table for the whole reality-TV viewing public to see. A network TV nanny came in to help Gerald be less of a problem child, but the cameras didn't catch what Tasha, his older sister and tormentor, was doing to him and his other sister, Lisi, or his mother's constant defense of her eldest daughter at the expense of her youngest children. And so Gerald continued to rage on. Though years of anger-management training and a boxing-gym regimen have helped him gain better control, his future still feels limited to jail or death. The narrative, though striking and often heartbreaking, is disjointed in places, namely with Gerald's grand plan to run away to the circus. However, this is still a King novel, and the hallmarks of her strong work are there: magical realism, heightened emotion, and the steady, torturous, beautiful transition into self-assured inner peace. Like Gerald, it's wonderfully broken. Grades 9-12. --Courtney Jones --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

The fact that this family, particularly the mother, thought that the issues that were going on could be resolved by a television show is absolutely ridiculous. How their mother believed that Gerald was more of a problem with his "acting out" compared to Tasha with her boyfriend at the age of twelve shows just how mixed up her priorities were. I really could not believe just how awful and manipulative Gerald's sister Tasha was; how she actually covered his mouth and nose in the middle of the kitchen, with both of their parents just sitting there, showed her power over all of them. After reading more of what happened to them as children, I completely understand why the other sister, Lisi, moved so far away. It did bother me a bit that she did leave because she was pretty much Gerald's only protection from Tasha but I know that she had to think about her well being as well. Gerald seems like a guy that I would have definitely wanted to be friends with in high school.

Everyone has their thing that they going through in high school, but Gerald is able to go through it with his head held high. I loved the mix of behind-the-scenes of the show and the present because it really showed the impact on the entire family but on Gerald in particular. I really did not like the anger management counselor he was probably forced to go to, Roger. He bothered me so because not only was he not a legitimate therapist but he seemed to be get off on Gerald's anger flare ups, like the boxing incident with Jacko, "The fake Jamaican". I love Gerald and Hannah together. There seems to be something about their relationship is so genuine. When Hannah took Gerald to Ashley and Nathan's house to see all the aquariums, it was like she was opening herself up to him in not so many words. Their rules were really just more well defined boundaries that we all have in all types of relationships, I just don't believe that they were ever able to have relationships with boundaries until this point. After they kidnapped themselves and had a bit of an adventure, I really think they could make it.

Reality Boy was so much more than I was expecting. I don't know what I was expecting, but this wasn't it. Delving into Gerald's life, present and past, was fascinating and horrifying at the same time. Like the concept of Reality TV, watching Gerald's life is like watching a car accident unfold before your eyes. You can't stop looking, even when the carnage is revealed. It's terrible and tragic and you are just hoping everyone will survive the fallout. A.S. King does a tremendous job looking beyond the surface and the camera editing and sees into the heart and soul of Gerald, and Hannah, and anyone else's life behind closed doors. Ignoring things does not make them go away, and frequently it just makes things worse. And amidst the evil, for lack of a better word, there is also hope. With every terrible character, there is a person with a flicker of hope, wanting something better and wishing that for another. And I love that Gerald gives me hope, beyond him just trying to stay out of jail. There is hope in this story, but there is a tough fight to get there, and I loved the journey. (Also, the world can always use more Hockey ladies.) And what a cast of characters we have. We are primarily looking at Gerald. And I loved Gerald. I wanted to hug him and steal him away and raise him with my three sons. Watching him go through his revelations was heart-breaking, yet he was so strong in character and I admired him for it. Gerald's messed up family plays a key role in his life and we get plenty of insight into how screwed up they are and why they do, and have done, the things they do. And while this is a work of fiction, there is truth in the inter-weavings of the story. There is truth that not only is there is so much behind the scenes of Reality TV, but there is so much beyond the "reality" of what people show in their daily lives. This is not only a reflection on childhood, but also on parenthood. On doing the right thing. On choosing

something uncomfortable because it is the right thing to do. On protecting the little guy. On not being blind to the truth and seeing what's really there and not just what you want. On taking responsibility and not just waiting around. There is truth that the way we parent, or don't parent, affects our children negatively or positively. I've witnessed these things, as I'm sure we all have. And I liked how the author addressed this. This is my first A.S. King novel, but it certainly won't be my last.

This is a 'finding yourself' book. I would love for my boys to read this and experience another's worries and situations. Each child has their own worry and each child feels they are the only one. This book is a great gateway for a young adolescent to read and feel another's concerns. The implied language was not my favorite but it was used well to make a distinction between classes of individuals.

If you love the writing of Rainbow Rowell--read REALITY BOY. If you're looking for bruised, but valiant characters--read REALITY BOY. If you're looking for quirky, damaged, heart-tugging romance--read REALITY BOY. If you like your books to raise thought provoking questions--read REALITY BOY. If you want to understand empathy--read REALITY BOY. If you want to laugh and smile and be reminded of what hope feels like--read REALITY BOY. If you've ever been so lost in this world that you wanted to run off and join the circus because shoveling elephant poop would have been an improvement--read REALITY BOY. If you like to read amazing books--read REALITY BOY. In case you didn't hear me--read REALITY BOY.

This is not my favorite A.S. King, but that's like saying it's not my favorite ice cream. It's still ICE CREAM and it's delicious. I found my suspension of disbelief stretched a bit by the sheer evilness of his sociopath sister and the idea that no adults, ever, would step in and deal with the "crazy". Beyond that, her characters are charming, their conversations absorbing and I wanted to cheer her main character on to a happy ending. Overall, this book is very satisfying. While it did not hold the emotional sway of say, What's Wrong with Vera Diez or Ask the Passengers or Everybody Sees the Ants---it still manages to stand on its own two feet. A quick read and worth it.

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