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The Schwa Was Here

Laura Wadley

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Shusterman, Neal. *The Schwa Was Here*. Dutton, 2004. ISBN 0525471820. 15.99. 228 pp.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Humorous stories;

Subject: Self-Perception-Juvenile Fiction; Friendship-Juvenile Fiction; Book--Review;

Anthony "Antsy" Bonano is a fourteen year old boy whose father works for Pisher Plastics. Antsy's dad asks him to test a new plastic product by trying to destroy a crash test dummy affectionately named Manny Bullpucky. While Anthony and his friends are tossing Manny off the Marine Street Bridge who should show up but a non-entity from school named Calvin Schwa. He is so entity-less it is almost impossible to tell when he is around. (Think "Cipher in the Snow," but with laughs.) The Schwa is so unobtrusive that he and Antsy set up a business where the Schwa does undercover work and takes dares--he is immediately put on retainer by the Student Council to sneak into the Teacher's Lounge to find out what's really up. Complications and adventures ensue which test former and new friendships, and which eventually bring the Schwa to a place where he begins to be more existent. Anthony as well begins to know himself and his place in his family and among his friends.

The Schwa Was Here is a funny, clean and upbeat novel. Shusterman proves that one can be incisive without having to be edgy.