



2010

Xtreme Monsters: Beasts

Lauren Bangerter

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Bangerter, Lauren (2010) "Xtreme Monsters: Beasts," *Children's Book and Media Review*. Vol. 31 : Iss. 4 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol31/iss4/18>

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Winters, Ben H. *The Secret Life of Ms. Finkleman*. Harper Collins, 2010. ISBN 9780061965418. \$16.99. 247 p.

Reviewer: Lauren Bangerter

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction;

Subject: Middle school--Juvenile fiction; Teachers--Juvenile fiction; Rock music--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Bethesda Fielding never turns down a challenge. When her social studies teacher assigns them a special project to solve a mystery in their lives, Bethesda determines to find out why the music teacher, Ms. Finkleman, is so extraordinarily ordinary. Pretty soon she is proclaiming to the whole school that Ms. Finkleman is the long lost rock star Little Miss Mystery. Unhappy with this discovery, Ms. Finkleman enlists Bethesda's help in assisting Tenny Boyer, a failing student who knows all about rock and roll, in producing a rock concert that the principle requested. Throughout the process Ms. Finkleman comes out of her shy shell, discovers the joy of teaching, and reveals that Little Miss Mystery is really her estranged twin sister Clem.

Winters's characters are memorable and charming. Each has his or her own personality, with realistic character development throughout the novel. The story is quick paced with many chapters ending in cliff-hangers, keeping the reader engaged and turning pages. This is an exciting middle school mystery that has a light, comedic feel. The reader learns along with Bethesda and Ms. Finkleman the importance of working hard, being honest, and treasuring relationships. This would make a great follow-up read to Andrew Clement's "School Days" books.

Volume 31, no. 4 (March/April 2011)