



2010

### Nothing

Gabriele I. Kupitz

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Teller, Janne. *Nothing*. Atheneum, 2010. ISBN 9781416985792. \$16.99. 227 p.

Reviewer: Gabi Kupitz

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fiction; Horror tales;

Subject: Meaning (Philosophy)--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction;

Schools--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

In a Danish town a young seventh-grade student decides on the first day of school he has had enough. After the teacher welcomes everyone back from summer vacation, Pierre Anthon announces that “nothing matters.” He packs up his backpack and marches off. Pierre takes up a perch in a plum tree and mocks his fellow classmates as they go to and from school because they are wasting their time with things that will end. He hurls plums and philosophical rants at them. His classmates get mad and want to prove that things do matter. In so doing, they build an altar of things that matter. Their makeshift altar, a nod to extreme peer pressure and lack of individual backbone, houses among other things: a bike, shoes, blue hair, personal chastity, religious belief, and some totally gruesome artifacts. When the notoriety this experiment attracts fails to win over the approval of Pierre Anthon, the participants get even madder and Pierre Anthon makes a mistake--he turns his back on them.

Winning a slew of awards in Europe and selected as a 2011 Batchelder Honor book and a 2011 Printz Honor book, *Nothing* is recommended to be read and discussed. The writing is sparse and the translation from the Danish is perfect. The characters mirror the bullies, the peer pressure mongers, the gossips, and the spineless crowd pleasers one meets in the school, the community, the church, the workplace, and wherever people congregate. *Nothing* does not have a happy ending, if it has an ending at all.

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