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Save Me a Seat

Abigail Packard

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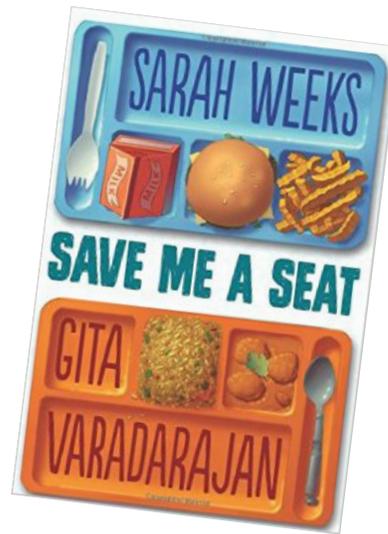
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Book Review

Title: Save Me a Seat
Author: Sarah Weeks and Gita Varadarajan
Reviewer: Abigail Packard
Publisher: Scholastic Press
Publication Year: 2016
ISBN: 9780545846608
Number of Pages: 240
Interest Level: Intermediate
Rating: Outstanding



Review

Joe was doing fine in school until both of his best friends moved away the summer before fifth-grade. Now he's unsure of who he'll sit with at school lunch or who will go with him to the resource room for extra help. And his new teacher doesn't know the things that help him learn best! Ravi was top of his class at his school Vidya Mandir back in India before his family moved to New Jersey the summer before fifth grade. Now he doesn't have any friends and his classmates don't understand him even though he speaks English. And his teacher thinks he needs to go to the resource room to get extra help. As the first week of fifth grade progresses, both Joe and Ravi realize that first impressions are often wrong. They also find common ground in a common enemy: the school bully, Dillon, who has Indian heritage but was born in America and thinks he's better than everyone else. Over the first five days of the school year, Joe and Ravi stop Dillon from playing a prank on them, become friends, and realize that the best way for them to fit into their new class is to be themselves.

Save Me a Seat is a fantastic middle grade book that offers readers a chance to take a walk in someone else's shoes and see how cultural and personality differences are a good thing and people can be friends no matter where they are from, how they talk, or how they learn. Joe and Ravi are both well-developed characters that completely make the story shine with their fun, brilliant personalities and real world struggles. The authors, Sarah Weeks and Gita Varadarajan, crafted this narrative in such a way to be approachable, likable, and relatable for middle grade audiences, while still providing ample opportunities for readers to really think about themes of friendship, kindness, and acceptance. Save Me a Seat is particularly poignant and memorable for middle grade audiences, but relevant for all ages since we could all learn to be a bit more kind to and accepting of others.