



2018

Alan Cole Is Not a Coward

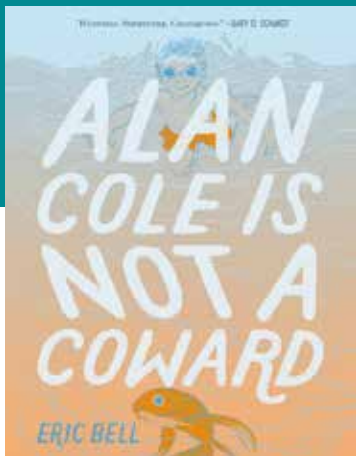
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Book Review

Alan Cole Is Not a Coward

Author

Eric Bell

Illustrator

Reviewer

Meagan Andrus

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

262

Year

2017

Publisher

Katherine Tegen Books

ISBN

9780062567024

Alan Cole likes painting and staying out of people's way, especially when it comes to his cold father and cruel older brother, Nathan. If he had his way, he'd spend his days learning how to paint faces and sneaking looks at Connor, the cutest boy in school. But when Nathan comes to him with a series of challenges, Alan finds himself stretched to the very limit of his comfort zone. Alan can't say no to the challenges because Nathan threatens to tell the whole school about his crush on Connor. Alan finds that the challenges push him to become something more than what he was—no longer a coward or an insignificant little goldfish, Alan steps up to embrace who he really is and hopefully make some changes in other people's lives along the way.

This book is heart-wrenching, funny, and moving all at the same time. Alan is a wonderful character that accurately relates the triumphs and mishaps of middle school. Readers will find themselves cheering for Alan as he slowly starts to break a cycle of abuse and neglect that his family has shown him for years. Though this book breaches some difficult topics, like abuse and sexual orientation, the overarching theme is that it's okay to be who you are, it's okay to be vulnerable, and it's good to try new things and step outside your comfort zone. Young and old readers alike will appreciate this book for empowering kids and teenagers to stand up for themselves and what they know to be right. Fans of books like *Wonder* and *Fish In A Tree* are sure to love this first novel from Eric Bell.

*Contains mild violence.