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Footer Davis Probably Is Crazy

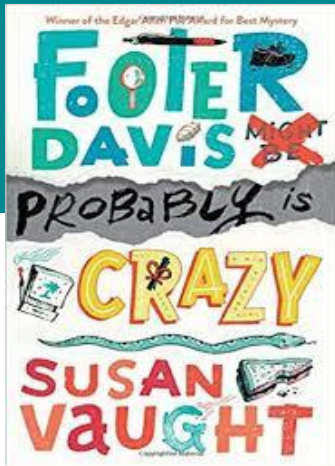
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Book Review

Footer Davis Probably Is Crazy

Author

Susan Vaught

Illustrator

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Reviewer

Becca Wilhite

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Intermediate

Pages

229

Year

2015

Publisher

Simon & Schuster Books

ISBN

9781481422772

Footer Davis, ten-year-old budding journalist, secretly investigates the details of a local tragedy with her best friend, Peavine Jones. Against her dad's instructions, her teacher's suggestions, and the bossy social worker's orders, Footer digs into the clues left behind after the fire at the Abrams farm. Instead of answers, she gets flashbacks—but that's impossible, since she wasn't even there. She realizes she's maybe, probably coming down with the same mental illness that has her mother locked up in a faraway hospital. With a dedication to finding answers that outweighs her fears for her own sanity, Footer discovers enough clues to solve the case and bring the truth to light.

This book doesn't tiptoe around questions of mental illness, physical disability, or child abuse; it lets Footer's engaging and believable childlike voice dive directly into them. With a fresh style that includes graphics, interviews, school papers, and sound-byte-style recollections, Susan Vaught brings playful voice to serious topics. Footer doesn't worry too much about her best friend's leg braces—in fact, she barely notices them. This makes his disability a non-issue, which is a refreshing form of inclusion in children's literature. Her worry about inheriting her mom's mental illness is justified, but she learns how small that possibility is (and therefore, so does the reader). This is an excellent novel and a delightful reading experience.

While many of the topics are sensitive, the treatment is childlike. An easing into many issues children may encounter.