

The Chocolate War

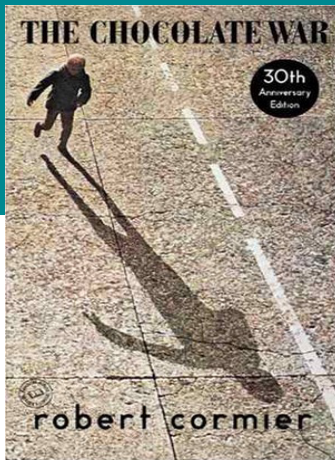
Abigail Packard

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Packard, Abigail () "The Chocolate War," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 40 : Iss. 1 , Article 67.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol40/iss1/67>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Children's Book and Media Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.



Book Review

The Chocolate War

Author

Robert Cormier

Illustrator

Reviewer

Abigail Packard

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

272

Year

1974

Publisher

Ember

ISBN

9780375829871

At Trinity, an all-boys Catholic high school, the word of the Vigils—the secret society of cruel and manipulative pranksters—is law. Each year at Trinity the students are asked to sell chocolates to raise money for the school. Participation is optional, but everyone does it. When Jerry Renault, a freshman, receives the assignment from the Vigils to refuse to sell chocolates for ten days, Jerry refuses to sell chocolates. But when the eleventh day comes, Jerry still declines to sell. Thus begins the chocolate war: a war of unspoken, cruel power plays between the Vigils headed by Archie Costello, vice-principal Brother Leon who is behind the fundraiser, and Jerry Renault, the rebel on his own. The stakes escalate as Brother Leon reveals that the chocolates must be sold or he may be fired for the debt he accumulated in purchasing them, and Archie's hold on the Vigils weakens. The story culminates in a final battle in which Jerry is pitted against one of the Vigils' thugs and mob mentality drives the battle into complete pandemonium.

Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*, instead of being about a simple school fundraiser, reveals a complex battle of wills and politics among the students, the prankster gang, and the faculty. The dark cruelty that manifests in the form of manipulation and violent bullying is made more horrible in the setting of a high school, a place of learning and youth and supposed innocence. Cormier's writing is clever as he hops from points of view, showing us the individual motivations that drive each character. There is language, sexual content (mainly depictions of male thoughts about sex), and violence present in this novel. But the presence of these elements adds to the novel by giving the audience a sense of the psyche of the characters and the culture of the school. Overall, *The Chocolate War* is a well-written novel that portrays two polar opposites of humanity: the light side of persistence and courage, and the dark side of manipulation and violence.

*Contains mild sexual content, moderate violence, and mild language.