2008

Science Fair: A Story of Mystery, Danger, International Suspense, and a Very Nervous Frog

Donna Cardon

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Reviewer: Donna Cardon;
Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult;
Rating: Excellent;
Genre: Mystery; Science Fiction; Adventure; Humorous stories;
Subject: Middle schools--Juvenile fiction; Science projects--Juvenile fiction; Spies--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

The Science Fair is always a time of fierce competition and drama, but at Toby's middle school the competition is unbelievable. Somehow the rich kids always have incredible entries way beyond their ability level--incorporating sophisticated, even classified, technology. Everyone knows that the rich kids are cheating, but when Toby decides to figure out how they are cheating, he discovers an international plot to bring down the government of the United States. He and his two friends, Micah and Tamara, try to alert the authorities and find themselves in deeper trouble than they could have imagined.

This amazingly funny action/sci-fi adventure has a host of memorable characters. Readers will find themselves chuckling as they realize, "Wow! I know someone just like that at my middle school." The principal, science teacher, janitor and Toby's parents are spot-on realistic, while the Star Wars obsessed burglars, foreign plotters, and FBI agents are hilarious. The characters are placed in situations that are constantly pushing the envelope of believability. Although the technology described is totally fictional, Barry and Pearson (*Peter and the Starcatchers*, Disney 2004) keep things close enough to reality to pull the reader along with the fun. The final action sequence is an amazing 160 pages long, but it is so engaging that Mom better not try calling a young reader to dinner 20 pages before the end. This is a great read for bright boys or girls who are not intimidated by a 400 page novel.

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