



2017

Henry Cicada's Extraordinary Elktonium Escapade

Aylea Stephens

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Stephens, Aylea (2017) "Henry Cicada's Extraordinary Elktonium Escapade," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 38 : Iss. 7 , Article 21.

Available at: <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol38/iss7/21>

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Book Review

Title: Henry Cicada's Extraordinary Elktonium Escapade

Author: David Teague

Reviewer: Aylea Stephens

Publisher: HarperCollins

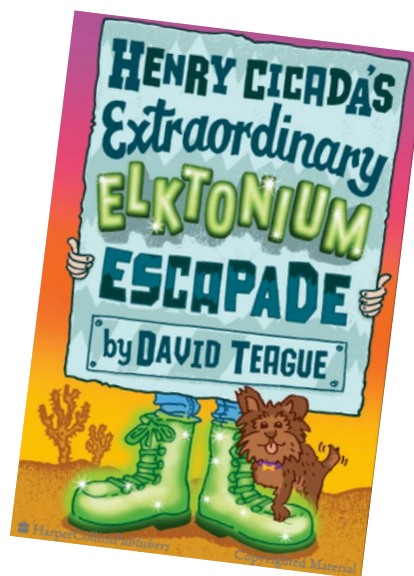
Publication Year: 2016

ISBN: 9780062377456

Number of Pages: 320

Interest Level: Intermediate

Rating: Cannot Recommend



Review

All Henry Cicada wants is to be ordinary and unnoticed, but this is hard to do when his dad spends all of his time in the basement trying to discover something useful to do with the odd green material his late wife discovered. Henry gets more than he wanted when he decides to stand up to the school bully, adopts a dog with only three legs, and then accidentally travels across dimensions into the imagination of a girl named Lulu through a doghouse made out of Elktonium. When he discovers that Lulu is in trouble and her aunt Tiffany is trying to crush her imagination and send her on the road to Nowhere, Henry knows he has to help. Even though what he thinks he wants most is to be ordinary, he learns that helping someone else who is hurting can make your own pain go away.

While it seems like this would be a fun, whimsical book, the entertainment is met with general confusion because of how it is written. Serious discussions about things like death, emotional abuse, and grief along with underdeveloped, strange characters and a setting that is never explored enough to make sense undermines both the message and the whimsical nature of the story. Instead of connection with the message or the characters, readers have to figure out what is going on and why what the characters want actually matters, and the story gets boring because there is no real emotion to drive the story in spite of some of the difficult circumstances the characters face. Readers who are looking for whimsy or a good message will be disappointed with this book.