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When Zachary Beaver Came to Town

By Kimberly Willis Holt



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When Zachary Beaver Came to Town By Kimberly Willis Holt

The red words painted on the trailer caused quite a buzz around town and before an hour was up, half of Antler was standing in line with two dollars clutched in hand to see the fattest boy in the world.

Toby Wilson is having the toughest summer of his life. It's the summer his mother leaves for good; the summer his best friend's brother returns from Vietnam in a coffin. And the summer that Zachary Beaver, the fattest boy in the world, arrives in their sleepy Texas town. While it's a summer filled with heartache of every kind, it's also a summer of new friendships gained and old friendships renewed. And it's Zachary Beaver who turns the town of Antler upside down and leaves everyone, especially Toby, changed forever.

With understated elegance, Kimberly Willis Holt tells a compelling coming-of-age story about a thirteen-year-old boy struggling to find himself in an imperfect world. At turns passionate and humorous, this extraordinary novel deals sensitively and candidly with obesity, war, and the true power of friendship.

When Zachary Beaver Came to Town is the winner of the 1999 National Book Award for Young People's Literature. This title has Common Core connections.



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Summer in the tiny Texas town of Antler is traditionally a time for enjoying Wylie Womack's Bahama Mama snow cones and racking up the pins at Kelly's Bowl-a-Rama, but this year it's not going well for Toby Wilson. His 13-year-old heart has been broken twice: once by his mother, who left him and his father to become a country singer in Nashville, and then again by his crush Scarlett Stalling, the town beauty who barely acknowledges Toby's existence. But when Zachary Beaver, "The World's Fattest Boy," comes to Antler as part of a traveling sideshow, Toby begins to realize that there might just be people who have it worse than him. By reaching out to Zachary in small ways--such as helping him realize his lifelong dream of being baptized--Toby is better able to put his own problems into perspective. At the baptism, Toby finally feels at peace: "Zachary smiles and I wonder if he's feeling different. Because standing here waist deep in Gossimer's Lake... I'm feeling different--light and good and maybe even holy." By summer's end, Toby's friendship with Zachary has provided him with the emotional stamina to begin dealing with his mother's decision and to gracefully accept the fact that Scarlett will forever be just beyond his reach.

With *Zachary Beaver*, Kimberly Willis Holt, author of the award-winning *My Louisiana Sky*, further explores southern-flavored small town life. Toby's quirky, yet ultimately rewarding coming of age story will serve as a gentle reminder to teens that sometimes the best way to work through your problems is by helping others with theirs. (Ages 11 to 15) --*Jennifer Hubert*

From Publishers Weekly

Holt (*My Louisiana Sky*) sets her heartwarming and carefully crafted novel during 1971, but her message of tolerance is one that contemporary readers will appreciate. The moment Zachary Beaver, "the fattest boy in the world," rolls into Antler, Tex., in a trailer, 13-year-old Toby Wilson stands in line with his \$2 in hand, waiting for a peek. Toby can't imagine what life is like inside the cramped trailer for the 643-pound boy. When Zachary's guardian suddenly takes off, leaving himAand the trailerAin the Dairy Maid parking lot, Toby and his best friend, Cal, become his caretakers of sorts, and eventually, his friend. Through this friendship, Toby learns sympathy and respectAnot just for the misfit boy but for his own recently estranged parents and a string of other quirky characters who struggle with personal tragedies. While a few of the plot points feel predictable, the well-developed characters, all fantastic and flawed in their own ways, add plenty of spice. There's Toby's mother who aspires to be the next Tammy Wynette; Scarlett, the pouty-lipped teen dream, who hopes to escape Antler by becoming a model; and Miss Myrtie Mae, the town librarian who sacrificed her one chance at love to care for her brother. Picturesque images such as Zachary's baptism in a man-made lake and the novel's culminating scene drive home the point that everyday life is studded with memorable moments. Ages 10-15. (Oct.)

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From Library Journal

Grade 5-8-A humdrum Texas summer is transformed when Toby and Cal befriend a surly sideshow star, arguably "the fattest boy in the world." Holt deftly fleshes out her characters and expands their worldview beyond the borders of their small town. (Nov.)

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Manuel Rodriguez:

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Ronald Ruggles:

In this age globalization it is important to someone to acquire information. The information will make a professional understand the condition of the world. The healthiness of the world makes the information easier to share. You can find a lot of referrals to get information example: internet, magazine, book, and soon. You will observe that now, a lot of publisher this print many kinds of book. Often the book that recommended for you is When Zachary Beaver Came to Town this publication consist a lot of the information of the condition of this world now. This kind of book was represented just how can the world has grown up. The dialect styles that writer use for explain it is easy to understand. Often the writer made some research when he makes this book. Honestly, that is why this book acceptable all of you.

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